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OPINION METER

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Which alternative energy do you think would work best in the CNMI: geothermal, OTEC, nuclear, wind, solar, or biomass?

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to cast your vote.

120 DAYS without a government budget for FY 2009

INSIDE

Car Rules
President Barack Obama is moving quickly toward rules requiring cleaner-running cars that guzzle less gas.

NATION...Page 16

Oscar Buzz
Technically, his name is 3453, but he also goes by Oscar, one of the biggest stars of this year's Academy Awards.

LIFE & STYLE...Page 20

'Only 15 percent of kids speak native languages' **PAGE 3**
'F' grade in report card poll upsets lawmakers. **PAGE 5**

Guerrero: Pension fund may be wiped out in 3 to 5 years

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

The CNMI pension program may be wiped out in five years or as early as three years due to the government's unpaid obligation and the impact of the global economic crisis on the NMI Retirement Fund's investment portfolio, Retirement Fund board chair Juan T. Guerrero said Monday night.

"The $209 million that the government owes the Fund grows every month. …If that debt and the stock market crisis continue, the Fund will be wiped out in five years. The worst scenario is three years," he said.

Guerrero, who is running for governor, said the Fund needs roughly $50 million a year to continue giving pension benefits to some 2,800 retirees.

The checks are supposed to be funded by the regular monthly collections from the central government and the autono-

See GUERRERO on Page 4

NMI pushed as Pacific Gitmo

Yumul seeks national detention center in CNMI

By KRISTI EATON
Kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Now that President Obama has ordered the closure of the Guantanamo Bay detention center within the year, Rep. Ray Yumul is proposing the U.S. government build a similar facility here in the CNMI.

Yumul, during yesterday's House of Representatives session, said he would prepare a resolution stating the CNMI is willing to host detainees.

Yumul

"This is a good opportunity to not just provide for the services of national security, and for the protection of Americans to include the Commonwealth, but also to bring in fresh resources and income for our weakening economy," he said after the session.

"If the U.S. is having a hard time trying to find hosting nations to take some of these detainees, we're

See NMI on Page 4

Remains 'presumptive positive' as Matubis

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The remains found Saturday in Marpi is "presumptive positive" as the missing Filipino surveyor, Alex M. Matubis, according to the acting commander of the Department of Public Safety's Criminal Investigation Bureau yesterday.

In an interview with *Saipan Tribune*, Sgt. Sylvan Rangamar said the CNMI driver's license and the ring recovered from the remains were linked to Matubis.

Rangamar said the driver's license was issued to Matubis, while the ring was identified by Matubis' brother, Arnold, as his brother's wedding ring.

Rangamar said they are still trying to obtain Matubis' dental records to positively link the re-

See REMAINS on Page 4

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
Alex Paga checks the company-service pickup truck of Alex Matubis, inset, at their housing in Garapan yesterday. Paga has been a surveyor-helper of Matubis since 1990. The truck was found abandoned near Kalabera Cave last Aug. 8.

Publication of *Island Locator* discontinued

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
A reader holds up the November-December 2008 issue of *Island Locator Magazine*.

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Island Locator Magazine, which has been in existence for some 20 years, is ceasing publication due to the economic crunch. Its final edition is the November-December 2008 issue, copies of which are being distributed this month.

The monthly magazine is distributed free of charge to readers and relied solely on advertising to run its business.

Residents relied on *Island*

See PUBLICATION on Page 4

Local

CPA upbeat on airport's new luggage handling system

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

The Francisco C. Ada-Saipan International Airport will soon use the much-awaited baggage handling system that would speed up the processing in the departure and check-in counters at the airport.

CPA executive director Efrain Camacho said last Saturday that they are expecting the Federal Aviation Administration to certify the equipment in the next few weeks.

"Maybe early next month… we will begin using them as soon as FAA certified it," he told Saipan Tribune.

Costing about $15 million, the new system is part of a major project funded by the FAA and was completed in May 2007.

The same project also includes an explosive detection system vital in the screening at the airport.

Saipan Tribune learned that the certification process was delayed due to mechanical problems identified during the trial run of the new equipment.

Last December, engineers of the manufacturer of the baggage handling system were on island to fix the problems.

Once certified, old scanners will be removed from the baggage counters and replaced by the new technology to speed up the operation.

Airport baggage runs through EDS and BHS as part of the screening process as required by Transportation and Security Administration.

Camacho said this development is just one of the many improvements to be seen at the airport's operation.

Last week, FAA representatives were on a two-day visit to the CNMI, inquiring on the possible airport projects that could be funded by the proposed economic stimulus package of President Obama.

A list of priority airport projects were asked from CNMI, Guam, Palau, and other Pacific islands.

In the Commonwealth, Camacho said the Saipan airport runway rehabilitation and the public address system are among the priority projects they will ask to be included in the stimulus economic package.

2 top posts remain vacant at PSS; acting HRO quits

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

Two top management positions at the Public School System have remained unoccupied for about three years now, prompting Education Commissioner Dr. Rita A. Sablan to order a re-announcement of the posts to attract a greater pool of applicants.

According to PSS, the positions of associate commissioner for administrative services and the finance director have been vacant since the departure of David Borja in 2006 upon assuming the commissioner's post, while the finance chief post was vacated upon the retirement of Richard Waldo in November of the same year.

Since then, PSS has been trying to get qualified applicants for the positions. Several announcements were made but no one has been hired, either because the applicants are unqualified or there were no applicants at all.

Yesterday, acting human resource officer Ramon Diaz Jr. confirmed that both positions are still vacant and is not expecting them to be filled right away due to the re-announcement instruction from the commissioner.

He said his office is in the process of preparing the new "job vacancy announcements," which will come out soon.

Serving in acting capacities for both positions are human resource officer Charlie Kenty and acting finance chief Lori Grizzard.

In the latter part of 2008, PSS hired Ed Tenorio as its financial consultant, primarily to work on the system's financial master plan. His one-year contract is worth $60,000.

Saipan Tribune learned that PSS also stands to lose Diaz himself.

According to Education Board vice chair Herman T. Guerrero, Diaz has tendered his resignation, effective Feb. 6.

Saipan Tribune learned that Diaz will assume the position of human resources officer in the Portland Public School System, which has approximately 50,000 students and about 8,000 employees.

Diaz started serving the system in May 2005. He is currently the acting HRO upon Kenty's assuming the acting ACAS.

When contacted yesterday, Diaz confirmed his resignation, citing he is truly grateful for the opportunity given him to serve the CNMI's public schools.

He described the overall experience "fantastic, wide, and varied."

"I have grown here tremendously. The experience I have working with great leaders of PSS is overwhelming," he said, adding that he will keep the lines open so he could help PSS in whatever way possible.

He lauded the HR's participation in establishing progress in the system's processes, which adheres to the national expectations of the No Child Left Behind Act.

HR anticipates a smooth transition upon the return of Kenty as HR officer.

Local Immigration staff's morale is down, says Grey

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The morale of the CNMI Immigration staff is down because they are scheduled to lose their jobs by June 1 when federalization takes effect, according to the local Immigration chief.

Division of Immigration Services director Melvin Grey told *Saipan Tribune* that the CNMI Legislature wants to guarantee them jobs, but there is no money to back it up.

"It's not like they are hoping, it's like we're out of a job on June 1st. So they are really hurting...What's their recourse? They are U.S. citizens working in their own country and the federal government put them out of jobs," Grey said.

The director said some of the staff resigned last December, others are now looking and lining up for jobs, and some are holding on because they have nowhere else to go.

"Others are holding on because they have taken the federal test and passed. They will just continue working until they hopefully get picked through the hiring process," Grey said.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection had already posted job announcements for Customs and Border Protection Officer Field Operations, listing the CNMI as a duty location.

Thirty-seven CNMI Immigration employees will reportedly be automatically eliminated from consideration because of the 37-year-old age cutoff.

Grey earlier said that, because of such hiring qualification criteria, less than 20 of local immigration officers may quality.

As of last December, the CNMI had 72 Immigration employees, including three at the U.S. Passport's Office.

The Legislature has passed a joint resolution that asked the U.S. Department Homeland Security to ensure that local Immigration employees and U.S. citizens in the CNMI be given priority when hiring in the CNMI.

‘Only 15 percent of kids speak native languages’

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

Alarmed by the “changes” that are about to happen as a result of federalization, the Chamorro Carolinian Language Policy Commission yesterday expressed concern over the additional impact it may bring to the CNMI indigenous languages, Chamorro and Carolinian.

Commission executive director Dave R. Omar disclosed that, based on the last assessment his office conducted in 2003, only 15 percent of students in public schools speak the indigenous languages while the rest use the universal language, English, in and out of their households.

“This assessment was done in 2003…and what we’ve seen was a very alarming rate of 15 percent. Although we’re not ready to pinpoint the ‘changes’ that may happen [to the indigenous languages] due to the federalization, we’re anticipating ‘changes’ will come along with it,” he told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday.

Omar said there’s much to be done to prevent the diminished use of local dialects on island.

A second study and assessment is up for discussion, according to the official. However, funding is always a major issue, preventing them from going ahead with this plan.

This time, he said, the commission will explore federal grants to pursue the study.

“This is an important undertaking we want to pursue because this follow-up study will be the basis of our actions” in preventing the lessened use of our indigenous languages, he said.

If the 2003 assessment reflected an alarming “15 percent vs. 85 percent” result, Omar said they are afraid to see much lower results.

“We’re hoping it’s not. Though we feel that we may get even lower numbers, still we’re optimistic that the ‘decline’ is not that obvious compared to the 2003 study,” he added.

As part of actions taken to address this concern, the commission and the Public School System have worked together in implementing and expanding the bilingual program in schools, later named the Heritage Studies program.

Offered both at primary and middle schools, Omar said the program is recommended for expansion to high schools and the extension of class instruction on the program.

However, besides funding, they found difficulty in getting instructors for the program.

“Those were some of the factors considered in the past,” Omar said.

Saipan Tribune learned that in the ’90s, heritage studies programs were also offered at Northern Marianas College, providing instructions separately for Chamorro and Carolinian enrollees. As part of the college curriculum then, any student who completes the program gets a three-unit credit.

“Unfortunately, this was also stopped because of the same reasons,” Omar said, adding the program was a direct work between PSS and NMC.

He said he dreams of “reviving” the program.

At present, only a television talk show that continues to promote the local languages is in existence.

Coupled with cultural and community programs for children, language conferences and workshops, Omar is optimistic that “improvements and progress” can still be seen on the indigenous languages.

‘Federalization’ meeting today at DPH cancelled

The scheduled first day of meeting yesterday between non-U.S. citizen employees at the Department of Public Health and Health Secretary Joseph Kevin Villagomez regarding the impact of federalization was cancelled.

The succeeding sessions set for today up to Friday will still push through.

Foreign nurses and other employees at the department fear losing their job once the federal government takes over local immigration by June 1.

But employees are thankful that Villagomez will meet with them to ease their worries. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

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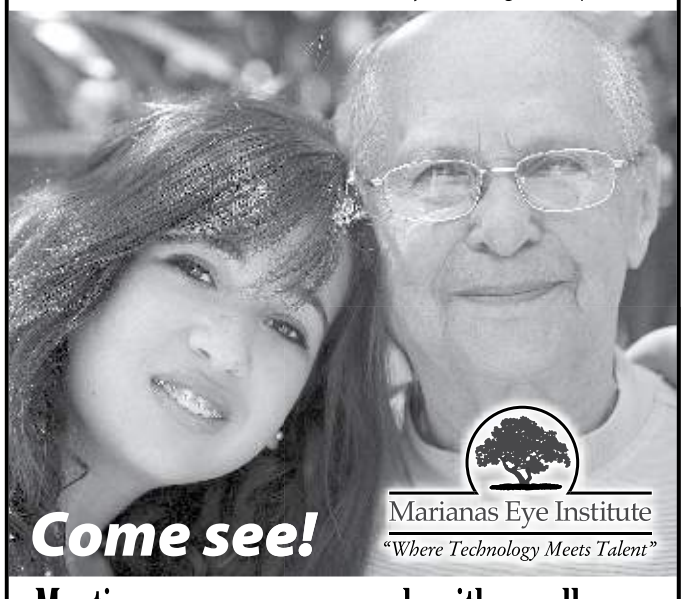

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Citizen groups sue Wespac, NOAA, DOC

HONOLULU, Hawaii—A lawsuit seeking basic government documents has been filed in Federal District Court against the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Department of Commerce by the Conservation Council for Hawaii, The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance, KAHEA; and the LOST FISH Coalition.

The lawsuit was filed to gain access to documents requested by the plaintiffs in a Nov. 14, 2007, Freedom of Information Act request submitted to Wespac seeking basic budget, grant, and contract information.

"In addition to shedding light on the long-hidden and most basic internal operations of this controversial federal entity, the documents may also shed light on how Wespac funds may have been used in what appears to be various lobbying campaigns to influence state and federal legislative and executive branch decisions related to marine conservation in Western Pacific waters," said Tina Owens of the LOST FISH Coalition.

Miwa Tamanaha, KAHEA executive director noted: "Wise, sound, community-based management requires accountability and transparency. If there is nothing improper, then there should be nothing to hide. With the situation of our ocean resources so imperiled, it is ridiculous that citizen groups should have go to these lengths to get basic information about use of our public dollars."

Wespac has been under scrutiny related to allegations of illegal lobbying, including actions to try and halt the Hawaii and CNMI national marine monument declarations, and for funding the controversial *Puwalu Series,* a lobbying ploy to pass legislation curtailing community-based-fishing-management programs in Hawaii.

Based in Honolulu, Wespac is the subject of at least two active federal investigations; one by the U.S. Department of Commerce Office of the Inspector General, and another by the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Tina Owens said, "Getting any public information from Wespac is virtually impossible, and that's not only not right, it's not legal. This is a federal entity, funded by taxpayers' money and unless specific documents fall under one of a few narrow FOIA exceptions, every document in their possession must be open to the public. Back in October of 2007, the public was told by Wespac executive director Kitty Simonds that Wespac's library and all of its documents '...are open to the public at any time,' For months I tried to access the Wespac library and Wespac documents, and at each turn Ms. Simonds put up new roadblocks to my access, often at significant cost and inconvenience. When she could ignore me no more, she backtracked and stated that I had to file a Freedom of Information Act request. So I did. Then she ignored that as well. What is Wespac hiding? How can a federal entity treat the public like this? They need to realize they are answerable to the public."

Lead counsel Peter Van Tuyn said that there is a "shocking insensitivity of Wespac and its executive director, Kitty Simonds, to the required open and transparent decisionmaking."

"As President Obama states, a 'democracy requires accountability, and accountability requires transparency,'" he added.

The original FOIA requests were generated as part of the plaintiffs' ongoing oversight of Western Pacific federal and state water ocean resource conservation issues involving the restoration and protection of the Western Pacific Ocean environment and the people who reside in the region.

Wespac is one of eight regional councils established under the U.S. Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Recovery Act to manage the nation's offshore marine resources. Additional information is available at www.wpcouncil.org. ***(PR)***

HISTORIC MOMENT
Visiting civil rights activist MarshaRose Joyner, left, and Walt Goodridge of the African-American Cultural Preservation Committee take photos of Barack Obama on a television screen at Bud's Bar in Garapan as Obama is sworn in as the 44th president of the United States at 3am on Jan. 21, Saipan time (12 noon in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 20).

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

NMI

From Page 1

willing to do that here," he added. "Economically, it's a very good opportunity because facilities will be built," he said, adding that the Commonwealth would see a multiplier effect because of the military and federal officials needed to administer such a facility. Locals could also be employed to work in the center, he added.

Questions concerning the safety of hosting the detainees should not be an issue, the representative said.

"Some questions were brought up about the caliber of these detainees, and that it might subject us to increased threat, but I don't see that because the U.S. Customs and Border Protection is doing their job," Yumul said. "They know how to go about securing the borders in its states and territories, so that shouldn't even be of major concern."

If it is a concern, it needs to be a national concern, he said.

Beginning June 1, unless otherwise delayed, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and its component agencies, including the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement will be in charge of immigration detention and the removal of aliens in the CNMI.

While serving in Iraq, Yumul said there were many times when reservists on active duty would guard high-threat targets.

"These were people caught in the act conducting terrorist activities in Iraq," he said. "I don't see why this would be an issue. We have very professional security officers, police officers. That shouldn't even be an issue."

The Commonwealth, Yumul noted, has experience with housing detainees. In 1999, the U.S. government requested the CNMI host hundreds of undocumented Chinese nationals on Tinian, after they were intercepted on their way to Guam. Overcrowding at the immigration holding centers in Hagatña forced the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to divert to Tinian boatloads of illegal Chinese nationals believed to be victims of human smuggling. CNMI officials had asked the federal government to reimburse the half-a-million dollars the local government spent to provide security and temporary shelter to the Chinese nationals.

Charles Reyes, press secretary for the Governor's Office, said the administration is always open to revenue-generating measures, but Yumul's idea seems unorthodox. There might be legal issues, and it would need to be examined further, he said.

Since Obama signed an executive order calling for Guantanamo Bay's closure last week, security experts have questioned where the detainees will be relocated. Countries within the European Union have said they are willing to help the Obama administration empty the Guantanamo facility, but some countries are hesitant to take in inmates.

GUERRERO

From Page 1

mous agencies.

For FYs 2006 and 2007, a law legalized the suspension of payments to the Fund. Although the suspension was lifted in FY 2008, the government is still delinquent in its payments.

There are two main sources of funds for any defined benefit plan—investment returns and government contributions.

Investment returns are typically left alone to grow and for the future use of the retirees, and should not be relied upon for current expenditures.

Government contributions are to fund current operations, pension and other benefit costs, as well as to service the long-term actuarially accrued liability.

The chairman said as long as the government continues to "underfund" the pension program, it forces the Fund to rely solely on the investments to pay for the benefits, as well as to service long-term liabilities.

"The main threat to the Fund's investments now is the constant drawdowns to fund pension cost," he said.

In the last 18 months, the Fund has withdrawn an average of $5 million per month or a total of over $110 million.

"If the government continues to ignore its responsibility to ensure the Fund is adequately funded, and the only revenue source becomes the investment assets, we now become a depleting fund and must shift to projecting when the assets are reduced to zero, rather than when the Fund becomes fully funded," the chairman said.

Offset

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial earlier said Public Law 15-70 and the conversion from the defined benefit plan to the defined contribution plan reduced the Retirement Fund's accrued actuarial liability from $1 billion in October 2005 to $879 million in October 2007 a

The Fund's assets at the time were the highest in its history.

But Guerrero said the drop in the accrued actuarial liability was offset by the losses sustained by the Fund in the stock market.

This also offset the government's non-payment of contribution to the Fund, which has an unfunded liability of about $500 million.

"The effects of P.L. 15-70 did reduce the actuarial accrued liability, but the gains were offset by the losses sustained in the stock market [in 2008]," said Guerrero.

Since the peak at the end of FY 2007, the Fund has withdrawn an additional $45 million from its investments to offset the government shortfall, coupled with a reduction in the Fund's assets by over 23 percent due to the global market meltdown.

Measures and bills have been introduced in the Legislature to help the Fund. Among those is a proposal to issue pension obligation bonds to pay the government's obligations to the Fund.

In addition, the Fund is in the final stages of drafting a crisis management plan. One of its goals is to draft an omnibus bill, which the Fund will bring to the Legislature and the Fitial administration.

REMAINS

From Page 1

mains to the surveyor.

The CIB commander said there will be no autopsy because the remains are mostly skeletal.

Rangamar said he is still waiting for the complete report about the case from the officer who is in charge of the case.

He added that investigation is still ongoing.

Meanwhile, Alex Paga, a surveyor-helper of Matubis since 1990, told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday that he and Matubis conducted a survey project at the Kalabera Cave area for more than a week last year.

Paga said the survey was made shortly after Matubis arrived from a vacation in the Philippines in June 2008.

A farmer, who was looking for cows, found the remains on Saturday morning at a farm. The farm is about a 10-minute drive west of Kalabera Cave, where investigators found Matubis' abandoned pickup truck after receiving a call last Aug. 19.

One of three persons who saw the truck told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday that, contrary to earlier reports coming from DPS, the truck's hood was actually not hot when they found it.

Rangamar agreed that the hood was not hot, only warm.

Paga also confirmed earlier reports that Matubis was "strangely silent" when he arrived back on Saipan from his vacation. He said Matubis used to be very jolly after coming from a vacation.

In fact, Paga added, when they conducted a survey project on Tinian last July 28, they almost got into an accident because Matubis was not driving attentively.

Paga described his friend as very religious and loving and a faithful husband.

The 47-year-old surveyor came back to Saipan last July 29. He was supposed to go that afternoon to Tinian, but he never showed up. He has been reported missing since July 30 last year.

PUBLICATION

From Page 1

Locator to "locate" real estate, apartments for rent, cars, and other goods on Saipan. Starting in April 2007, the magazine had expanded its readership with the addition of news features, making it a favorite read by many.

Beth Del Rosario, branch manager of Elite Printing, yesterday said the economic recession, which led to low advertising income, necessitated the closure of the publication but said this may be temporary.

"Once the economy gets better, we may republish the magazine," Del Rosario said.

Island Locator and Elite Printing are owned by ASG Corp.

"The magazine served a lot of purposes…I'm sure people will miss it," Dr. Jack Hardy, former owner of *Island Locator*, told *Saipan Tribune*.

Hardy and Kayla Kim bought the publication from its original owner, Bruce Smith, around 1995.

"Smith started it in the early '90s. I worked with him when I started with photography. I also worked with the other owner, a dentist, usually for free, taking photos. I thought it's a great idea and asset to the community so I, along with a Korean lady, Kayla Kim, bought it around 1995," he said.

Hardy, a retired surgeon and now a full-time professional photographer, sold it about two years later to ASG Corp., which owns Elite Printing, that prints the magazine. Resty Segismundo, owner of ASG Corp., could not be reached for comment yesterday.

In the last issue of *Island Locator*, the editor said the magazine, like any other business on island, tried to stay in business with the economic slump affecting the U.S. and island communities.

"Sadly, our magazine couldn't stand the beating of the economic difficulties anymore. We have to fold up and temporarily discontinue publishing," the magazine said.

The last issue's feature cover is Shodo calligraphy, which originated in China and came to Japan in the sixth or seventh century.

‘F’ grade in report card poll upsets lawmakers

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

Several lawmakers are taking issue with the failing grades they received in a mid-term “report card” poll on a House member’s website.

Last week the *Saipan Tribune* reported that all but two of the members of the Legislature were receiving an ‘F’ grade in a poll conducted on Floor Leader Joseph Camacho’s Web site. The poll lasts through the end of the month. During yesterday’s House session, several members expressed anger at the results as reported in the paper.

Rep. Victor Hocog brought the issue up at the end of the session, saying he learned about the results Saturday morning, the day an article was published, after he was alerted to them.

The poll results have discouraged him, Hocog said, because the poll voters “have degraded” the lawmakers, their performance and the Legislature as a whole. Maybe, he said, it would be a good idea to just filibuster during the session and receive an ‘E’ grade.

He also questioned the criteria used in the poll.

“So I just wonder Mr. Speaker, how did that grading system come to play?” he asked. “Maybe it would be good, Mr. Speaker, to check the product of individual legislators to see how many legislations have been signed into public law and grade them accordingly.”

Then, he added, people would understand what’s going on, rather than reading it in the newspaper or on the Internet.

Camacho, in the notice announcing the poll on his Web site, encouraged the public to educate themselves by reading legislation, voting records and committee reports before voting.

“If we’re going to do this I think we should come up with a criteria and put it out in the public and let the public grade us accordingly,” Hocog said. “Not just put something out in the air so people can just make comments and they’re not sincere in the way they put their thoughts together.”

But Hocog commended Camacho for launching the Web site where the public can view and comment on legislation.

Rep. Joseph Reyes said he is not surprised by the results and urged lawmakers to work together.

“You know, it’s happened before,” he said. “This is election year. I encourage everybody to work collectively in order for us to deliver that oath of office we were sworn in to do last year.”

Camacho, for his part, admitted there are shortcomings to the poll, but has tried to combat them by limiting one vote from each IP address and by recognizing cookies within computers.

Ultimately, Camacho said that, as public officials, lawmakers must answer to the people.

“It’s a reflection of the general sentiment of the people out there,” Camacho said. “They’re not seeing what the Legislature is doing.”

The Floor Leader said he heard positive feedback when he proposed launching a joint House-Senate Web site, but nothing transpired. He later pushed for a House-only Web site, which was also lauded, but again there was no response. So he said he decided to launch his own Web site.

On Friday afternoon, Camacho and Rep. Tina Sablan were the only lawmakers within the House and Senate to receive an ‘A’. But as of yesterday afternoon, Sablan was the only lawmaker receiving an ‘A’, as Camacho had fallen to an ‘F’. Overall the House and Senate were receiving ‘F’s.

Palms Resort drops talks with int’l chain to manage the hotel

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Palms Resort is not going ahead with earlier plans to look for an international hotel company to manage the hotel on behalf of its current owner, the United Micronesia Development Association, according to general manager Mustafa S. Issa.

“We will continue to operate as Palms Resort, as a standalone hotel instead of being part of an international chain of hotel,” Issa said yesterday.

Palms Resort, however, is about to seal a deal with Preferred Hotel of the World, a sales agency representing hotels around the world by taking reservations on behalf of these hotels.

Issa said parties are working out the details of the agreement and may be finalized by the end of February.

“This way, we make sure the hotel will continue to be known as The Palms Resort and we will run it as the best hotel on the island. We can run the hotel and we only need someone to take bookings on our behalf,” he added.

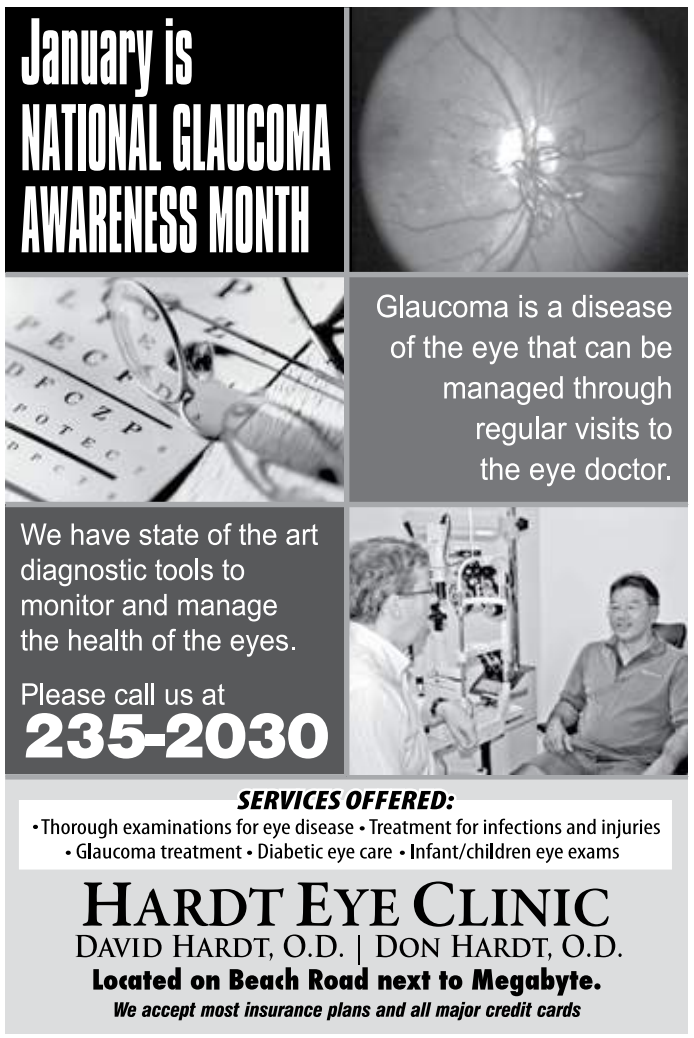
Currently, the hotel has an average occupancy of 55 to 60 percent.

Issa cited other best hotels in the world that are not necessarily part of international hotel chains but are called “standalone” hotels.

“We can have the best hotel in Micronesia that doesn’t necessarily belong to an international hotel chain. For example, the Burj Al Arab or the Arab Tower Hotel, which is considered the only 7-star hotel in the world. It’s a standalone hotel,” he said.

Palms Resort was earlier in talks with an unnamed international hotel chain on a management deal expected to increase its profile by giving a major boost to its marketing campaign.

Under such agreement, the international hotel chain would have managed the hotel but UMDA will retain control of the hotel.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New CUC deputy director to begin work this week

By KRISTI EATON
kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

New Commonwealth Utilities Corp. deputy director Wallon Young is expected to arrive on island this week to help with the restoration of the power plants, at which time CUC can decide whether or not to renew the contract with Aggreko.

"The best thing to do is to wait for Wallon," said CUC executive director Antonio Muña. "He was someone we feel had the expertise and time and effort to honestly engage his services, so the next time we address the issue it will probably be with him. Hopefully, he can communicate that all the effort that has been done so far will put us in line with being able to make a decision with what we need to do by June 13."

CUC must decide by that date if it is going to extend its one-year contract with Aggreko for an additional six months. The utility agency has been renting the generators, which produce 15 megawatts of power, from Aggreko for $504,000 per month.

Muña has said in the past that ideally CUC would be producing enough power to end the contract with Aggreko but an extension is not out of the question.

Power Plant 2 currently has one engine up and running, producing two megawatts. Privately-run Power Plant 4 regularly produces 14 megawatts and, with the 15 megawatts provided by the emergency Aggreko generators, CUC has been able to meet the daily island demand of approximately 41 megawatts

Restoration work has already begun on the engines, but Young will be able to develop a complete plan, Muña said.

Of the eight engines at Power Plant 1, only a handful work on a regular basis. By the end of the year CUC hopes to have engines 1, 5, and 7 up and running, the executive director said. During Young's initial 30 to 60 days, he will work in assessing the engines, Muña said.

"We'll continue the process [of restoration] but basically he [Young] will come up with a report to focus on to what extent we'll be able disengage from Aggrekko," he added.

In December, Nikolao Pula, director of the Office of Insular Affairs, agreed to Gov. Benigno Fitial's request to reprogram $3.8 million in funds to help with the effort. The $3.8 million, along with leftover money from OIA, totals $5.4 million, enough for the necessary engines to be repaired, Muña said.

Young, a former American Samoa Power Authority official, will earn $156,000 to $180,000 per year as deputy director for Utilities Systems Rehabilitation. His contract is for two years.

MEDICAL ATTENTION CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The recently concluded Marianas Visitor Authority-sponsored Winter Festival Of Runs saw Emmanuel College's commitment to community partnership. In this photo, two nursing students tend to a participant, a Japanese tourist, seeking minor medical attention.

Adriano remains flown to Tinian tomorrow

The remains of the late Senate President Joaquin G. Adriano Sr. will be escorted from the Commonwealth Health Center to the Tinian Health Center tomorrow, Jan. 29, 2009, at 11am.

The next day, Jan. 30, 2009, a Mass will be held at 10:30am at the San Jose Church, followed by interment services at the San Jose Cemetery.

At the moment, daily Mass is being offered every morning at 6am at the St. Jude Church in Koblerville and nightly rosary is being held at 8pm at Mr. and Mrs. Henry M. Cabrera residence on Tinian.

Adriano, 49, was found dead inside his home in Koblerville Thursday last week and police have initially ruled out foul play.

Adriano was named Senate president in 2004. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

Adriano

Son of ex-Guam governor is guest of honor at Mason officers' installation

The son of former Guam governor Manuel Leon Guerrero will be the guest of honor in the upcoming installation of elected and appointed officers for this year's Saipan Masons.

Saipan Tribune learned yesterday from the island's Masons that Alfredo D. Leon Guerrero, the Guam International Airport Authority property manager, will serve as the keynote speaker during the installation of the officers of Emon Lodge 179. The event will be held this Saturday from 5pm to 9pm at the Saipan World Resort's Royal Taga.

Leon Guerrero, who currently has the title Very Worshipful Noble in the Masonry, is the past District Deputy Grand Master for the Grand Lodge of the Philippines.

Leon Guerrero is also the president of the Guam Shriners Association, which is under the jurisdiction of the Aloha Shriners of Hawaii.

The Guam Shriners Association is sponsoring all the transportation costs for patients referred to the Shriners Hospital in Hawaii. The costs include the chaperones of the patients traveling from the Marianas region.

The Shriners centers in Hawaii and California treat crippled and burned children worldwide. Some of the Masons' charitable contributions go to these facilities.

This Saturday's ceremony, businessman Isagani E. Benoza will be installed as Worshipful Master for the Emon Lodge No. 179 of Masonic District No. 54 under the Jurisdiction of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines.

Masons are also known as Freemasons. They belong to the oldest and largest fraternal organization in the world. The fraternity uses the tools of ancient architectural craftsmen symbolically in a system of instruction designed to build character and moral values in its members. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Woman gets house arrest for receiving stolen railings

Superior Court Associate Judge David A. Wiseman yesterday imposed a 30-day house arrest on a woman who received stolen stainless steel railings.

Wiseman sentenced Gloria Agulto Cabrera to five years in jail, all suspended, except for 30 days under house arrest, for the offense of receiving stolen property.

Wiseman ordered the 34-year-old Cabrera to start serving the house arrest by today, Wednesday.

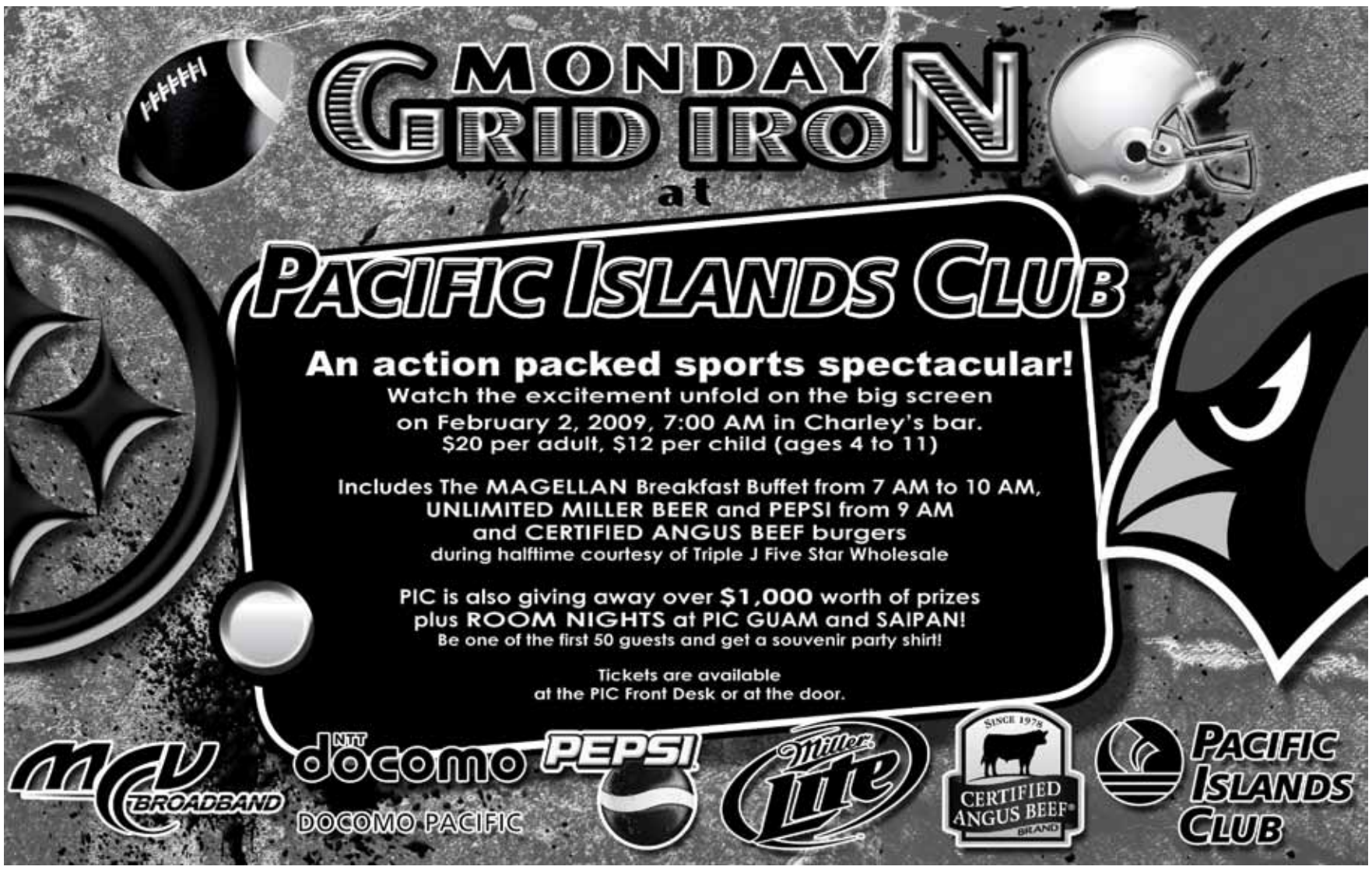
Cabrera will be placed on five years probation and required to write a letter of apology to the victim, Kwang Ho Kim.

The judge ordered the defendant to perform 300 hours of community service and pay a $150 fine, $100 assessment fee, and probation fee.

He directed Cabrera to report to the Community Guidance Center for counseling evaluation.

Cabrera entered a guilty plea to the charge of receiving stolen property.

According to the factual basis of the plea deal, on July 18, 2008, Cabrera received the stainless steel railings belonging to Kim, knowing that it had been stolen. ***(Ferdie dela Torre)***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PSS turns to subs due to hiring difficulty

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Public School System has turned to hiring substitute teachers as it currently is having a difficult time recruiting qualified classroom teachers, according to PSS acting human resource officer Ramon Diaz Jr.

Of the 490 teachers in the system, Diaz said 20 to 30 are substitutes. He added that the unexpected and immediate resignation of a number of teachers was the reason why PSS resorted to hiring subs.

Saipan Tribune learned that substitute teachers are usually offered a three- to six-month contract by PSS.

However, depending on the need and the recommendation or request of principals, these substitutes could also be given "long-term" contracts, Diaz said.

"That contract can be terminated anytime," he added.

Currently, of the 490 public school teachers, 67 percent are highly qualified, with a degree, valid teaching certificates, and passed Praxis tests, Diaz said.

He said it is the policy of the system to equip every classroom with an HQT based on the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

As for the impact on instruction of putting substitutes in classroom teacher positions, Diaz explained that some substitutes are "retirees" who have knowledge on student performance and student learning.

"In this case, we're seeing no big difference or impact on the quality of instruction. Those retirees hired as classroom teachers are equipped with the knowledge and know-how on student learning and performance," he said, adding they are qualified to provide quality learning for students.

But Diaz is not discounting the "influence" of substitutes who may not have a degree or passed rigorous exams. *Saipan Tribune* learned that a few of these substitutes are new graduates.

The acting human resource officer said majority of the substitutes are assigned to secondary schools, doing the work left by the teachers in mostly content areas.

"The recruitment of off-island teachers is very difficult now," he disclosed, adding that the CNMI has limited talent that could be tapped by the public schools.

"We have a very limited talent here," Diaz said, adding that those talents are mostly in the system now.

The current state of the economy and the environment add to the factors in "encouraging" foreign talents.

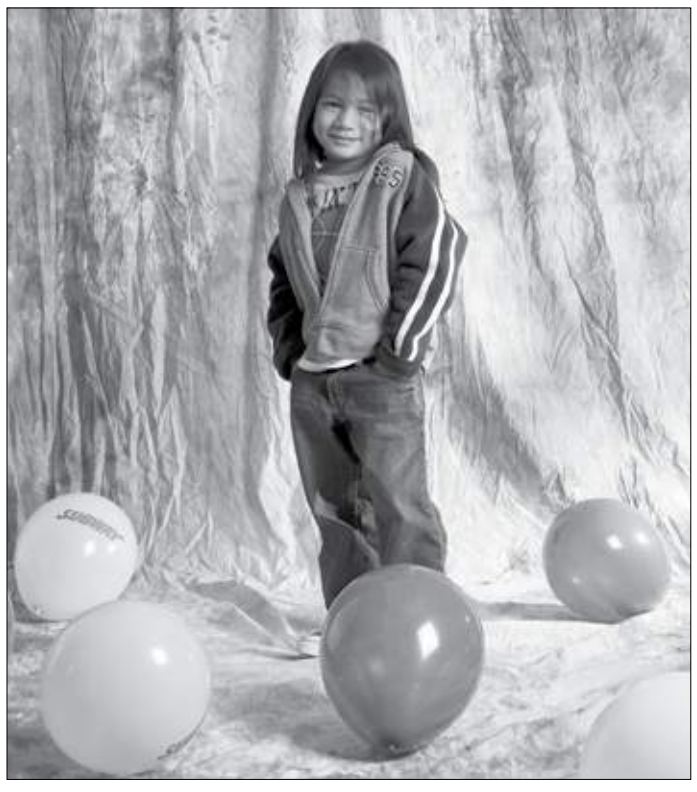
Just recently, two classroom teachers tendered their immediate resignation from PSS. The same positions will also be offered to substitutes until replacements are named, he added.

Based on the teachers' compensation plan, an HQT receives a salary between $28,000 to a maximum of $47,000 annually, depending on qualifications and requirements while those who have yet to pass Praxis 1 and 2 have their salaries reduced to the starting level until they pass the requirement.

Saipan Tribune learned that some substitutes are also considered teacher aides and assistants.

The Northern Marianas College is the only institution that offers a degree program in elementary education. After graduation, these alumni could only serve the elementary level.

For the secondary level, teachers in content areas or specialized subjects need to have a specific degree associated with the discipline they are teaching in. To meet such a requirement, one needs to enroll in off-island universities and colleges, which offer the courses.



THANK YOU CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

"I would like to thank my family, friends and all text voters who supported me in my endeavor to become the 2009 B*each Road Magazine* Little King of Hearts. Your votes are very much appreciated and wouldn't have done it without all of you." Your Little King of Hearts, Ian Julius Manglona.

LA MODA ISLA HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

Stepping into the spacious La Moda Isla in Garapan is like shopping in a museum of visual arts and local crafts. The newly opened souvenir and gift shop has been changing the retail landscape in the tourist district of Garapan.

US Coast Guard air crew rescues free diver off Lanai

HONOLULU—At approximately 11:35am yesterday, an air crew aboard a U.S. Coast Guard HH-65 Dolphin helicopter rescued a Lanai free diver who had been reported missing more than four nautical miles from shore.

The diver, 52-year-old Bruno Ambay, had been reported missing by three friends from a 15-foot boat at 9:40am. The four men had been free diving approximately four nautical miles off Manele Bay, Lanai, when Ambay went missing.

Coast Guard search and rescue planners in a 24-hour command center in Honolulu launched a search using crews aboard the HH-65 helicopter from Air Station Barbers Point and aboard a 47-foot motor lifeboat and 25-foot small boat from Station Maui.

The crews were on scene before 10am and reported ideal search conditions. The air crew spotted Ambay swimming along a rocky shoreline area at about 11:35am, hoisted him aboard and then flew to Manele Bay to transfer him to a waiting Maui County Emergency Medical Services crew.

The crew aboard the 47-foot motor lifeboat took the divers' Boston whaler in tow to Manele Bay. The vessel had lost power off shore.

"This was a great example of a quick response to a quick call for help," said Coast Guard Petty Officer 1st Class Jared Friedman-Torres, a search and rescue controller in Honolulu who planned the search. "His diving partners knew something was wrong, gave us a call and we got there quickly and then partnered with Maui County EMS to get him to safety." ***(USCG)***

SHIPPING SCHEDULE

MARIANA EXPRESS LINES PTE. LTD.

Outbound from Asia	Voyage No.	ETD Jakarta	ETD Bangkok	ETD P. Kelang	ETD Melbourne	ETD Singapore	ETD Hochiminh	ETD Busan	ETD Kobe	ETD Shanghai	ETD Auckland	ETD Manila	ETD Hongkong	ETD Kaoshiung	ETD Naha
MELL SENOKO	016E	1/17 Sat	1/15 Thu	1/15 Thu	1/13 Tue	1/10 Sat	1/23 Fri	1/19 Mon	1/18 Sun	1/11 Sun	1/11 Sun	1/19 Mon	1/23 Fri	1/25 Sun	1/27 Tue
MELL SENTOSA	015E	1/24 Sat	1/22 Thu	1/22 Thu	1/20 Tue	1/17 Sat	1/30 Fri	1/26 Mon	1/25 Sun	1/18 Sun	1/18 Sun	1/26 Mon	1/30 Fri	2/1 Sun	2/3 Tue
STADT HAMBURG	029E	1/31 Sat	1/29 Thu	1/29 Thu	1/27 Tue	1/24 Sat	2/6 Fri	2/2 Mon	2/1 Sun	1/25 Sun	1/25 Sun	2/2 Mon	2/6 Fri	2/8 Sun	2/10 Tue
MELL SENOKO	017E	2/7 Sat	2/5 Thu	2/5 Thu	2/3 Tue	1/31 Sat	2/13 Fri	2/9 Mon	2/8 Sun	2/1 Sun	2/1 Sun	2/9 Mon	2/13 Fri	2/15 Sun	2/17 Tue
MELL SENTOSA	016E	2/14 Sat	2/12 Thu	2/12 Thu	2/10 Tue	2/7 Sat	2/20 Fri	2/16 Mon	2/15 Sun	2/8 Sun	2/8 Sun	2/16 Mon	2/20 Fri	2/22 Sun	2/24 Tue
STADT HAMBURG	030E	2/21 Sat	2/19 Thu	2/19 Thu	2/17 Tue	2/14 Sat	2/27 Fri	2/23 Mon	2/22 Sun	2/15 Sun	2/15 Sun	2/23 Mon	2/27 Fri	3/1 Sun	3/3 Tue

Inbound from Asia	Voyage No.	ETA Guam	ETD Guam	ETA Saipan	ETA Yap	ETA Koror	ETA GenSan	ETA Davao	ETA Cebu	ETA Hongkong	ETA Kaoshiung	ETA Busan	ETA Yokohama	ETA Manila	ETA Singapore
MELL SENOKO	016E	1/31 Sat	2/1 Sun	2/1 Sun	2/3 Tue	2/5 Thu	2/7 Sat	2/8 Sun	2/10 Tue	2/13 Fri	2/14 Sat	2/19 Thu	3/10 Tue	3/8 Sun	2/18 Wed
MELL SENTOSA	015E	2/7 Sat	2/8 Sun	2/8 Sun	SKIP	2/12 Thu	2/14 Sat	2/15 Sun	2/17 Tue	2/20 Fri	2/21 Sat	2/26 Thu	3/17 Tue	3/15 Sun	2/25 Wed
STADT HAMBURG	029E	2/14 Sat	2/15 Sun	2/15 Sun	2/17 Tue	2/19 Thu	2/22 Sun	2/23 Mon	2/25 Wed	2/27 Fri	2/28 Sat	3/5 Thu	3/24 Tue	3/22 Sun	3/4 Wed
MELL SENOKO	017E	2/21 Sat	2/22 Sun	2/22 Sun	SKIP	2/26 Thu	2/28 Sat	3/1 Sun	3/3 Tue	3/6 Fri	3/7 Sat	3/12 Thu	3/31 Tue	3/29 Sun	3/11 Wed
MELL SENTOSA	016E	2/28 Sat	3/1 Sun	3/1 Sun	3/3 Tue	3/5 Thu	3/7 Sat	3/8 Sun	3/10 Tue	3/13 Fri	3/14 Sat	3/19 Thu	4/7 Tue	4/5 Sun	3/18 Wed
STADT HAMBURG	030E	3/7 Sat	3/8 Sun	3/8 Sun	SKIP	3/12 Thu	3/14 Sat	3/15 Sun	3/17 Tue	3/20 Fri	3/21 Sat	3/26 Thu	4/14 Tue	4/12 Sun	3/25 Wed

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

SSHS report cards out

To all parents and legal guardians of Saipan Southern High School students, report cards will be issued on Feb. 5, 2009, from 4pm to 7pm, in the counseling office. All students will be dismissed at 1pm. ***(PR)***

MMAC team captains' meeting today

The Marianas March Against Cancer Committee will be having its first "Team Captain's Meeting" today, Jan. 28, 2009, at 5:30pm, at the Department of Public Health Deputy Secretary's Conference room (across the gift shop at CHC). Everybody who is interested in participating in this year's March Against Cancer Event on May 22-23, 2009, is welcome to attend this meeting. For more information, e-mail Catherine Attao (attao20@yahoo.com), Chris Concepcion (chrisaconcepcion@gmail.com) or visit our website at www.cca-marianas.org. You may also call 682-0050.

Puengin Inetnon on Friday

Puengin Inetnon will begin on Jan. 30, 2009, at the Kagman Community Center's parking lot. Puengin Inetnon is Kagman's Friday Night Market that will take place every government payday. It will begin at 4pm and end at 10pm. There will vendors selling food, drinks, snacks, clothing, and crafts. Puengin Inetnon is a family oriented event. Alcohol will be prohibited from the event. All are welcome. ***(PR)***

Friends of the Arts audition call

Auditions for "My Fair Lady" the musical stage production and the final FOA production of the current year will be held Thursday, Jan. 29, 2009, from 6pm to 8pm and Saturday, Jan. 31, 2009, from 3pm to 5pm at Marianas High School, Room 101-D.

This is a large cast production and singers and actors from teen years to mature adults are needed. Principle roles as well as group/chorus scenes are a big part of this musical. Backstage help is also needed, so even if you don't sing or act, you can still be a part of this production. Auditions for acting roles will be held on the above dates if time allows. Showtime for the play will be in late April. Rehearsals will be held evenings and weekends. Those auditioning should be prepared to sing a selection of their own choosing or one of the production numbers. Anyone interested in being a part of the production, but unable to attend either of the auditions dates, call Susan Fishman-Tudor at 233-2225, leave a message with a contact number. ***(PR)***

Attention to families with disabilities on Rota

The Family Hope Center under the CNMI Council for Developmental Disabilities and Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc. would like to inform the community that its system navigators will be on Rota today, Jan. 28, 2009, to conduct interviews and follow up(s) for families with disabilities.

Families with disabilities on Rota are urged to contact the NMPASI offices at 234-7273/4 for Frances Torres or Dorain Camacho or CNMI DD Council for Lillian Ada at 664-7005/7000 or cell phone 287-5643 for appointment. ***(PR)***

John Gonzales Live schedule

The public is invited to watch and learn about newsmaking issues on John Gonzales Live on KSPN Channel 2 from 7pm to 8pm. You can participate by text (285-6382), calling (287-4230), or email johngonzales@pticom.com.

Jan. 28 Cervical Cancer Cervical Cancer Survivor, Breast & Cervical Cancer Program Mgr.

Feb. 11 Legislative Leadership and Major Unresolved Issues Sen. President Pedro P. Reyes, House Speaker. Arnold I. Palacios

Feb. 18 Preventing Teen HIV and Unintended Pregnancies Public School System

Feb. 25 Agriculture and Aquaculture: Research & Econ. Opportunities
NMC CREES

Mar. 11 Retirement Fund Crisis NMIRF Board and Administrator

Mar. 25 Immigration & Labor Uncertainty
CNMI Immigration and Dept. of Labor

Deadline set for filing quarterly tax returns

The Division of Revenue and Taxation is reminding all CNMI residents that the 2008 4th Quarter deadline for filing the quarterly tax returns is Monday, Feb. 2, 2009. The Division of Revenue and Taxation will be open from 7:30am to 6:30pm on Monday Feb. 2, 2009. The office of the Division of Revenue and Taxation is located at the Joeten Dan-Dan Commercial Center. For more information call 664-1000, 664-1034 Compliance Branch, or 664-1065 Collection Branch. ***(PR)***

DEQ brigade sets COP cleanup

The Division of Environmental Quality cleanup brigade will be picking up trash at Coral Ocean Point (Unai Dangkulo) on Feb. 7.

Thos who would like to volunteer may join the group on Saturday, Feb. 7, at 8am. Volunteers will clean until 10am and break for drinks and then continue, if needed.

This month, outstanding brigade volunteers who participated in at least 10 monthly cleanups will receive a brigade cap and those who participated in at least three cleanups will receive a green brigade t-shirt. For more information about volunteering, contact the DEQ office at 664-8500. ***(DEQ)***

Nepalese passport found

A community resident has found a Nepalese passport. Anyone who lost a Nepalese passport may contact 287-4536. ***(PR)***

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP09-CHC-003

SUBMISSION: FEBRUARY 27, 2009 TIME: 2:00 P.M.

"HEMODIALYSIS AND PERITONEAL DIALYSIS DISPOSABLE/CONSUMABLE SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTH CENTER"

THE RFP PACKAGE MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY IN LOWERBASE DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS RFP ARE DUE ON **JANUARY 30, 2009, CLOSE OF BUSINESS** AND MUST BE ADDRESSED TO MR. JOSE A. ICHIHARA, MEDICAL SUPPLY OFFICER AT (670) 322-8980 OR FAXED TO (670) 322-8987. **A PRE-PROPOSAL CONFERENCE** WILL BE HELD ON **FEBRUARY 04, 2009 AT 10:00 A.M.** AT THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTH CENTER CONFERENCE ROOM.

PREFERENCE IS AVAILABLE TO US CITIZENS OR PERMANENT RESIDENTS AS PER PUBLIC LAW 15-95 AND AS FURTHER AMENDED BY PUBLIC LAW 15-118 AND MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE PROPOSAL IF PREFERENCED IS CLAIMED.

/s/ JOSEPH K.P. VILLAGOMEZ
SECRETARY OF HEALTH

/s/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

MARIANAS PUBLIC LAND TRUST
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 11, The Open Government Act of 1992, the Marianas Public Land Trust has scheduled a Board of Trustees Regular Meeting to be held on **Saturday, January 31, 2009 beginning at 11:00 AM at the Rota Gaming CommissionOffice; Tatachong, Rota, MP.**

The following agenda is hereby established:

I **PRELIMINARIES**
- Call to Order
- Roll Call
- Adoption of Agenda
- Adoption of Minutes

II **NEW BUSINESS**
- Committee Formation
- Housekeeping Matters - Board/Administrative
- Agenda Matters Establishment

III **OLD BUSINESS**
- Land Acquisition Matters
- IBPC Proposal

IV **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
At anytime during this scheduled meeting, the Board of Trustees may be required to enter into Executive Session to discuss matters deemed privileged and confidential.

V **MISCELLANEOUS**

VI **ADJOURNMENT**

In accordance with Public Law 8-4 1, additional agenda items may be added to the above listing only by the recorded vote of the majority of the trustee governing body.

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written and oral testimony on the above agenda items.

/s/ Vianney B. Hocog
Chairman, Board of Trustees

ROTA CASINO GAMING COMMISSION (RCGC)
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
P.O. Box 1547 ROTA, MP 96951

PURSUANT TO THE OPEN GOVERNMENT ACT, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION, DIEGO M. SONGAO HEREBY ANNOUNCES THAT THE ROTA CASINO GAMING COMMISSION'S REGULAR MEETING FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2009.

DATE: **Friday, January 30, 2009**
TIME: **3:00 PM**
LOCATION: **Rota Casino Gaming Commission's Office**
Public Library Annex Building, Tatachog, Rota

AGENDA

I. Call to Order
II. Roll Call
III. Adoption of Agenda
IV. Adoption of Minutes
V. Chairman's Report
VI. Old Business
1. Rules and Regulations
2. Technical Amendments

VII. New Business
1. RCGC Official Seal
2. Revised Budget
3. Website Development
4. Personnel Development
5. RCGC Bank Account
6. Investment Guide
7. RLD $20,000.00 Budget for RCGC

VIII. Miscellaneous
IX. Adjournment

*At anytime during the meeting, the Commission may move to Executive Session.

DIEGO M. SONGAO **January 22, 2009**
Chairman

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

JANUARY 28, 1999

Number of local jobseekers triple in '98

The number of resident workers seeking employment in the private sector has jumped more than triple in 1998 compared to the previous year, a sign that maybe attributed to the worsening economic crisis in the Northern Marianas, according to officials. But the number of qualified local people hired by companies has also shot up at the same rate, widening opportunities for residents to enter into the field largely comprised of foreign manpower, said Alfred Pangelinan, director of the Division of Employment under the labor and immigration department. "I don't know whether (the reason) is the economic situation or it is because of the public notices that we put out (for them) to come in and register with us if they are looking for job," he told in an interview.

MVA eyes more flights

As a result of negotiations made by the Marianas Visitors Authority and the Aviation Task Force, Korean Airlines may resume its operation in the CNMI while Far Eastern Air Transport is scheduled to begin providing Saipan-Taipei direct service in May. Northwest Airlines is also looking at the possibility of replacing its DC-10 aircraft to a B-747 on Saipan, increasing the number of passengers by 45 percent, MVA board chairman Dave M. Sablan yesterday said. "We are doing everything to increase the arrivals to save the island's main source of revenue," he said. However, Sablan said efforts are moving slow because Asia's financial crisis has dampened people's enthusiasm to travel abroad.

JANUARY 28,2000

CUC hits back; tells Kumoi to pay debts

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation board chair Rosario M. Elameto defended yesterday Executive Director Timothy P. Villagomez from bribery allegations as she lashed back at Sen. Ramon S. Guerrero for making CUC "nearly bankrupt" during his administration. "This attack by [Mr. Guerrero] on the CUC executive director is totally irresponsible," she said in a statement. "It is just another attempt to attack the Board's decision on the 80-MW plant." Echoing the points made by Mr. Villagomez earlier, Ms. Elameto said the reported affidavit from Alice Fleming Villagomez was "sealed" document referred by CUC to the Attorney General's Office last year for investigation. She disclosed that it was sent to AGO on Jan. 29, 1999, which in turn handed in an "official notification" on Aug. 4 that year finding that the allegations "were baseless and [it] closed the matter."

Power plant probe pressed

Insisting there are still questions hovering over the controversial Saipan power project, Sen. Ramon S. Guerrero yesterday pressed the investigation he sought into charges of bribery leveled against Commonwealth Utilities Corporation Executive Director Timothy P. Villagomez. He gave credence to the reported affidavit last year from Alice Fleming Villagomez, who is divorced from the CUC official, that cited instances where the alleged bribery occurred. Mr. Villagomez has called the allegations "lies" as he noted that an investigation conducted by the Attorney General's Office cleared him of any wrongdoing in connection with the procurement of the new power plant on Saipan.

JANUARY 28, 2002

Taco Bell coming to Saipan

Mexican restaurant Taco Bell will soon branch out to Saipan after a local businessman recently acquired a franchise of the food chain giant. Industry sources disclosed that Dr. Al Alou of the Pacific Medical Center had applied for a franchise of Taco Bell from Tricon, the restaurant's mother company, and has already been accepted. He is currently shopping for a qualified person to handle the business. Sources said the Mexican restaurant will be erected on the Beach Road location of the defunct Wendy's. Wendy's left Saipan in 2000 in the wake of the Asian currency crisis that crippled major businesses in the Northern Marianas. Industry players disclosed that Alou has already directed that the Wendy's area be cleared, even as other business-related procedures are being completed. Sources added that an application for a business permit has already been filed at the licensing division of the Department of Commerce.

Fiji's military ruler defies calls for democracy

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea (AP)—Fiji's military ruler said Tuesday it could be 10 years before he relinquishes power, issuing a defiant challenge to South Pacific leaders as they met to press him into restoring democracy.

Commodore Frank Bainimarama, who seized power in a 2006 coup, promised a regional forum the following year that he would call elections by this April.

But on Tuesday, Bainimarama told troops in the capital, Suva, he must amend the constitution, thus allowing him to make the electoral law less discriminatory toward Fiji's non-indigenous minorities, before he can call elections.

Bainimarama

"If it takes us five years or 10 years to hold elections, then so be it," Bainimarama was quoted as saying on the Fijilive Web site.

The comments were a direct challenge to Pacific leaders who gathered Tuesday in nearby Papua New Guinea.

Bainimarama, whose coup was Fiji's fourth since 1987, refused to attend the meeting, saying he needed to stay home to deal with the aftermath of recent deadly floods.

Pacific leaders urged the military leader to at least produce a plan to return the impoverished island to democracy.

"We can't have a position where there is no road map for democracy, where there is no timetable for democracy and no intent on Bainimarama's part to ... get the country back on the rails," New Zealand Prime Minister John Key told reporters ahead of Tuesday's meeting.

"We need to put some pressure on Bainimarama to honor his word," he said in the Papua New Guinea capital of Port Moresby.

Australia and New Zealand, whose aid budgets and security muscle make them regional powers, have imposed travel bans on members of Fiji's military regime and their families.

They favor stiffening sanctions or even suspending Fiji from the 16-member trade and diplomatic bloc the Pacific Islands Forum. Tonga, Samoa and Papua New Guinea have signaled they would oppose suspending Fiji from the bloc.

Attorney General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum—who represented Fiji at the meeting—cautioned against pushing Bainimarama, saying the elections could be held in a year.

"The holding of elections for the sake of holding elections is not going to achieve any proper outcome nor will it achieve any long term democratic stability in Fiji," he said.

Application deadline nears for three Farm Bill Programs

HONOLULU—Applications are being accepted from farmers and ranchers for three different Farm Bill Programs that are administered by the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The three programs include Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, and Agricultural Water Enhancement Program.

ON THE NET

www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs
www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov

Interested farmers and ranchers have until Feb. 13, 2009, to submit their applications to be considered for this ranking period.

"We're focusing our conservation efforts on treating identified priority natural resource concerns on lands being used to produce agricultural products," says Lawrence Yamamoto, director of the Pacific Islands Area for the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Financial assistance is available through EQIP to agricultural producers who are willing to implement conservation measures that treat the targeted natural resource concernson their land (including forestry, organic farming, and energy conservation). AWEP is a new activity within EQIP to address ground and surface water conservation. WHIP provides technical and financial assistance to improve fish and wildlife habitat.

Projects that install conservation measures on agricultural lands to address the following proposed identified priority natural resource concerns are being considered: animal waste, sedimentation, noxious weeds, insufficient water supply for livestock or irrigation, pesticide or nutrient contamination of ground or surface waters, at-risk species habitat, and invasive species.

For a full description of the program eligibility, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs.

NRCS will provide technical assistance to help agricultural producers design, plan, and implement their conservation measures. Interested farmers and ranchers are asked to call their local NRCS Field Office for more information. To find the office nearest you, visit www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov. ***(USDA)***

SSA rep visits Tinian, Rota

A Social Security Administration representative will be on Tinian and Rota today and tomorrow to accept social security number applications, inquiries about eligibility, change of address, and answer questions regarding programs administered by Social Security.

Today, Jan. 28, the representative will be on Tinian at the Community and Cultural Affairs Office located at the Tinian Gymnasium from 8am to 2pm. On Thursday, Jan. 29, the representative will be on Rota at the Office of Aging from 10:30am to 4pm at Sinapalo village.

To apply for a social security number, one must present original or certified documents, no photocopies are acceptable. First time U.S. citizen applicants must present a birth certificate, proof of identity and if under age 12, a parent must present his or her identity. For a replacement card, a U.S. citizen must present proof of his or her identity and citizenship. All proof of identity must be valid. Non-U.S. citizen applicants must present an original passport and CNMI entry permit or U.S. permanent residency card. All documents must be valid.

Social Security makes quarterly visits to the islands. All residents are urged to make time to visit the representative regarding any Social Security matter. For more information, contact the office at 234-6203. ***(PR)***

Cook Isles hospital without anesthetist

RAROTONGA, Cook Islands (Cook Islands News/PIR)—The ministry of health has issued a statement saying the hospital still has no anesthetist on duty this week—but a locum is expected on Saturday.

The current full time Cook Islands anesthetist fell acutely ill last Friday and is receiving medical care at the hospital.

"The hospital has downgraded all surgical procedures to emergencies only or operations requiring local anesthesia. We have medical doctor capacity to provide sedation, spinal block and general anesthesia," says the statement.

The ministry confirms that it has been in contact with members of the Royal New Zealand College of Anesthetists and other consultants in Auckland seeking urgent assistance but has not been successful in identifying an anesthetist who is available now.

The unfortunate situation has even caught the attention of New Zealand media this week.

The ministry is recruiting a locum anesthetic registrar who will be arriving in Rarotonga this Saturday.

BUD LIGHT
Budweiser
BUDBOWL
TAMPA 2009
February 2nd, 2009.
Hard Rock CAFE
Doors open at 7am
Godfather's Bar
Doors open at 8am
OLEAI
BEACH BAR & GRILL
Doors open at 8am
Free T-Shirts while supplies last, win cool Bud Bowl gear!*
Bud Family on Special, Enjoy Breakfast and Lunch & Watch the Big Game.
*Must be 21 yrs or older to participate. While supplies last.
RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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EDITORIAL

Week one

President Obama's executive orders in his first week of office went beyond setting the right tone. From access to government records to family planning to interrogation methods, Mr. Obama rewrote policy in substantive, positive ways. He also—this is not a criticism—put off many difficult decisions and left room for reappraisal in key areas, such as how to handle dangerous detainees. He rightly avoided hasty solutions to complex problems.

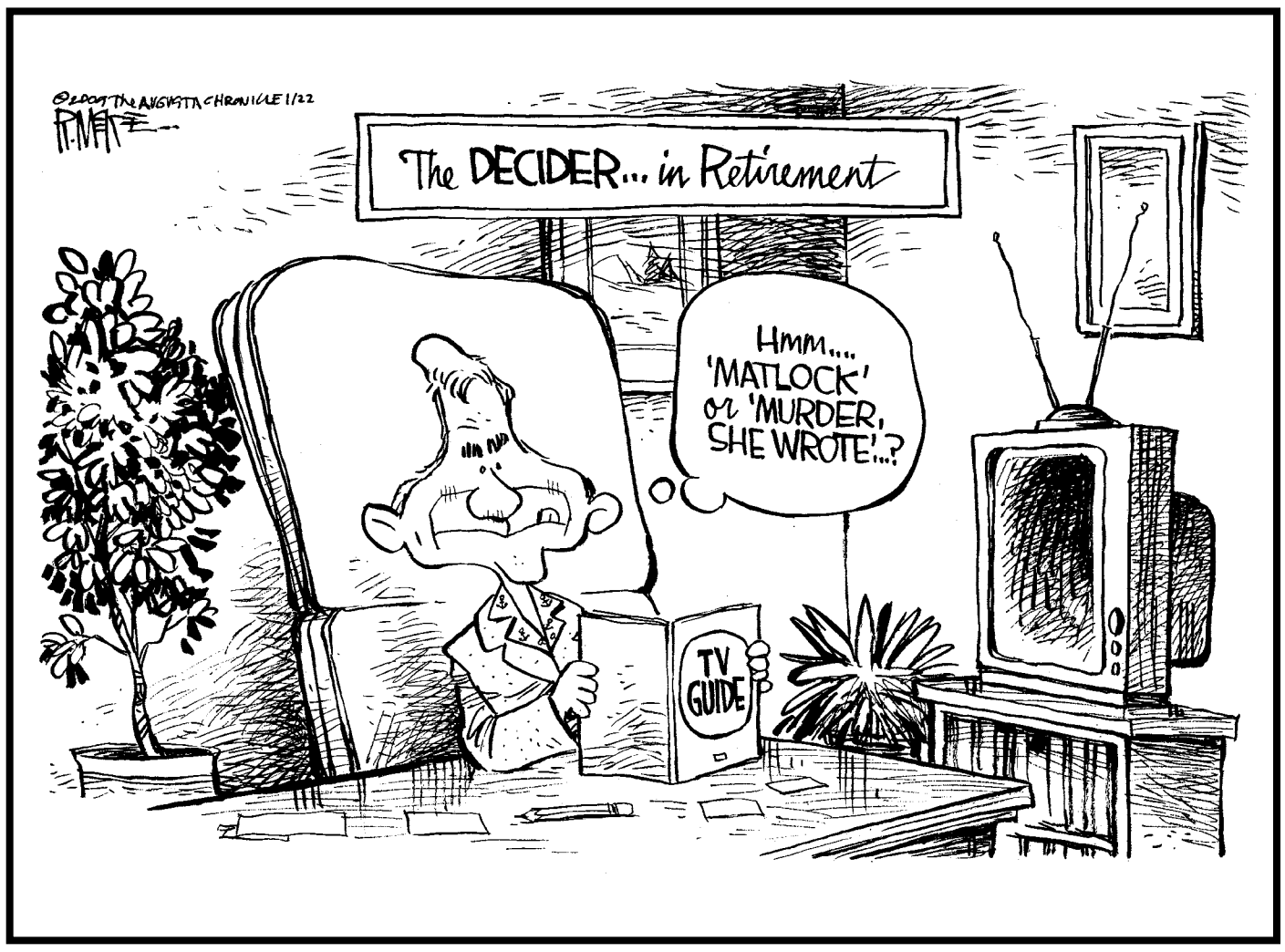
Mr. Obama adopted a tough ethics policy under which officials who leave his administration will be barred for the duration of his presidency—and, yes, that could include two terms—from lobbying the executive branch. The ban is sweeping in time and scope: Current revolving-door rules cover just one year and prohibit officials from lobbying only the department in which they served. The strict rule may discourage some talented people from entering government, but it also will help dispel the notion, and to some extent the reality, that people enter government only to cash in later.

The new rules also bar registered lobbyists from working in the administration on areas in which they have lobbied. Mr. Obama is taking grief for his decision to grant a waiver from that rule to his nominee for deputy defense secretary, William J. Lynn III, who was the top lobbyist for military contractor Raytheon Corp. Given Raytheon's broad reach, it's fair to question how Mr. Lynn will recuse himself from issues of interest to the company. But Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said that he pressed for an exception "because I felt that he could play the role of the deputy in a better manner than anybody else that I saw." The president's rule ensures that any conflicts will be carefully watched, and his flexibility despite certain criticism signals an ability to make hard but reasonable calls.

Mr. Obama also took a jackhammer to the legal structure that for eight years has been used to undermine the international reputation of the United States in the fight against terrorism. In executive orders issued on Jan. 22, Mr. Obama nullified Justice Department opinions that provided legal cover for interrogation techniques such as simulated drowning. He decreed that all detainees—legal or illegal combatants—are protected by Geneva Conventions. He revoked the Central Intelligence Agency's authority to detain prisoners for more than brief interrogation periods and barred the agency from operating secret prisons abroad. And he ordered that all U.S. interrogators abide by the Army Field Manual, which identifies interrogation techniques that comport with international and domestic strictures against abuse.

Yet Mr. Obama's orders also contain measures of prudence. He called for a task force to determine whether those Field Manual techniques provide nonmilitary intelligence agencies with "an appropriate means of acquiring the intelligence necessary to protect the Nation." The task force will "recommend any additional or different guidance for other departments or agencies," if warranted. If Mr. Obama

See WEEK on Next Page



Turn your panic into profit

The only way to take control of your life, raise your standard of living and move beyond merely surviving is to create your own unique product or service that you offer to increasing numbers of people in exchange for the things of value that you desire. This simple formula applies to countries as well as people. A self-sufficient economy has its own products or services of value to export to the world. Similarly, a self-sufficient individual has something of value to exchange in the global marketplace. That thing of value is based on your natural talent, skill, or interest—in other words, your passion!

THE SAIPANPRENEUR PROJECT *Creating economic success for the CNMI*

By WALT F.J. GOODRIDGE
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Send article suggestions, entrepreneur nominations and feedback about this article to walt@passionprofit.com.

Here on the Ground

I received an e-mail last week through my SaipanLiving.com website from a Filipina lady living in Los Angeles who is coming to visit Saipan. She just got laid off from her job and is considering moving to Saipan, because, as she states, "the economic situation here in the mainland is very bad right now. It scares us."

Now, don't you think that's pretty interesting? While people are packing up and fleeing Saipan in search of a better life, people are packing up and fleeing TO Saipan in search of a better life. It just goes to show that one woman's prison is another woman's paradise.

I went to a few garage sales over the weekend in search of a ceramic water dispenser that I've yet to find (hint, hint). One woman, who had never held a yard sale, was utterly shocked at the response she got.

"People actually buy stuff!" she said.

Another friend having a garage sale had people parked outside his house and knocking on his door at 7:30am for an 8am sale, and when it was all done, made close to a thousand dollars that morning. It just goes to show that one man's treasure is another man's trash.

I helped another friend go to view a van he's considering purchasing for a new business he's starting. The seller is eager to sell to cut losses and end the drain that registration, insurance and upkeep on the van is causing. It just goes to show that one business' burden is another one's boon.

From Where You Sit

Yes, opportunity is a very subjective thing. In other words, whether you see opportunity or oppression in a downturn or recession is based entirely on where you sit. The leaders of industry and the winners in life are the ones who can see opportunity in its infancy, when all others see oppression.

The reason a situation seems dire and hopeless is not because there is no solution to be found, it's because you're asking the wrong questions and seeing limited options from a flawed paradigm. Until your paradigm changes, you are forced to respond to a given situation in very limited ways.

Say, for example, you're the leader of a nation, and all previous leaders had a paradigm and worldview based on fear, suspicion, distrust, violence and domination. With such a paradigm, the natural response becomes, "*They are the enemy. They are a threat. We must crush, we must kill, we must destroy. We need more weapons, we need more soldiers, we need bigger bombs and more and bigger, and more and bigger.*"

But what if you, as a new leader, simply changed the paradigm and said, "hey, let's talk this out. Anyone who was once our foe can be our friend if the conditions of mutual benefit and respect are right." Can you see how such a shift would change the response and the reactions?

Strategic Thinking

So, likewise, as you face the seemingly worsening conditions and threats all around, ask yourself the following question: "Is there a different paradigm through which I can perceive and interpret what is happening?" which leads to questions which will develop your strategic thinking:

What is the opportunity here? Where must I stand in order to see it?
How must I think in order to understand it?
Who must I become in order to take advantage of it?
What must I do in order to harness it? When must I do it in order to maximize it?

So, while others are fleeing and fretting, someone with the right perspective can see opportunities developing. And while its ultimately more desirable to start a business in an economic boom, it doesn't mean you can't also be successful if you start one during a downturn/recession.

A recent article I read outlined the plus side of starting a business in an economic downturn:

1. It forces the founders to be thrifty in their budgeting since bank loans and venture capital may be harder to get. 2. It forces you to make your idea really exceptional and able to be sold in both good and bad times. 3. A team willing to commit to a new business in dire times is exactly the type of people your business needs. 4. Startups get a head start. When the recovery begins—as history shows it usually does—those who started early will be ahead of the pack.

See TURN on Next Page

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, Century Insurance Building, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

'Selected' problems and events impacting all NMI retirees

First of a two-part series

By WILLIAM H. STEWART
Special to the Saipan Tribune

William H. Stewart is an economist, historian and military cartographer.

A recent presentation by Buck Consultants, the Retirement Fund's actuarial experts, regarding the condition of the Fund was followed up by an article in the Jan. 21 issue of the *Saipan Tribune* where a statement appeared quoting the governor as follows, "Government failure to remit all required contributions [to the Fund] might have been a plus." There followed a statement that the Fund experienced losses of 28 percent on its investments.

Meaning, as I interpret the statement, that had the central government paid its legal obligation to the Fund when due, and in the amount legally required, that the Fund's investment in the stock market would have been lost as a result of the recent decline in the market.

It should be realized and well appreciated that because the central government did not remit to the Fund the actuarially determined amount required by law and also failed to make the required employer contributions in the legally obligated amount since the year 2002—including the employer's contribution for those NMI government employees who work on federally financed programs and projects—the Fund had to take steps to manage its investment portfolio in such a way to be able to meet its fiduciary responsibility to retirees by having money available at the proper time and in sufficient amounts to pay their monthly pensions. Upon the advice of Fund consultants, investments had to be leveraged toward the more riskier equity investments rather than those considered more conservative. If the Fund had been receiving the monthly actuarial determined rate and the employer contributions from the government there would have been no need to purchase the more volatile equity investments with the result that the losses that were sustained by the Fund would have been much less and, indeed, perhaps not lost at all.

As is well known, the Fund has had to tap into its investment portfolio to obtain the money to pay pensions. The central government has forced the Fund to do this because of their nonpayment and as a result the Fund is rapidly reducing the size of its investment base.

In short, and in my judgment, the losses experienced by the Fund can be traced directly back to the central government and the resulting payment deficiencies that occurred as a result of the government not making payments to the Fund in the proper amount and at the proper time. It's time the central government and the Legislature realize the magnitude such neglect has had on the member's future financial security.

'The individual members of the various boards of directors of the NMI's independent agencies should be aware they have a fiduciary duty to uphold and can be held individually responsible for failure to exercise that duty.'

In any event, the central government is still indebted to the Fund and while hopefully one day it will be paid, there is no denying the fact that the dollars at that time will have far less purchasing power. For example, last year a dollar was worth more than that same dollar is today in terms of its purchasing power. Consider last year's cost of a bag of rice—or anything else—and you will know what I mean.

The same diminishment in purchasing power of the money the government owes the Fund applies equally as well. One of the goals of the Fund's investments—at the very minimum—is to earn a return equal to, or greater than, the rate of inflation, thereby preserving the purchasing power of the dollar as a hedge against inflation.

The major agencies of the government who are deficient in making their employer contributions to the Fund are (amounts rounded): CUC, $1.4 million; NMC, $4.4 million; PSS, $7.4 million; Tinian Municipal Treasury, $1.1 million; Finance, $150 million; and all others, $0.3 million. Total $165 million.

The individual members of the various boards of directors of the NMI's independent agencies should be aware they have a fiduciary duty to uphold and can be held individually responsible for failure to exercise that duty. If you are a board member and don't believe that, you had better check with the agency attorney if there is one.

I mention this as it could relate to nonpayment of the employer's contribution to the Retirement Fund as a result of management deficiencies. Since all fiduciaries have potential liability for the actions of their co-fiduciaries and knowingly participates in another fiduciary's breach of responsibility, conceals the breach, or does not act to correct it, that fiduciary can be liable as well.

See SELECTED on Page 13

Immigration? Repatriation?

By STEPHEN B. SMITH
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Stephen B. Smith is the Accreditation, Language Arts, and National Forensic League coordinator for the Public School System Central Office.

Of all of the things that bother me the most about the anticipated federal takeover of some of the CNMI's affairs, it is the possibility that many of our long-term residents may be repatriated to their "technically" native shores. This just isn't right. Oh, I'm sure it's legal right enough, but for me at least I do not see it as right.

Decades have passed now as business in this archipelago was granted by the federal government the authority to design its own immigration methodology. The islands prospered at least in part because of this federally granted authority, certain as it was that there was nowhere near the necessary indigenous manpower to fulfill manpower requirements. And that simple truth has not changed: there are simply not enough indigenous folks to take care of the economic needs of the Commonwealth. And…

What of the human part of this equation? Those foreign citizens who came here, made homes here, contributed to the economy here have lives, too. They have lives here. Their children, and yes many of them have had children here—it often happens when people set down roots—have been raised in the American style of life and education and social and religious mores. Send them back to their native shores? Their native shores are here, not there, wherever there is!

I have lived in these islands for over 20 years. My mechanic is Filipino; he has been my mechanic for almost all of the 20 years that I have been here. I have even had some of his grandchildren in my high school classes when I was teaching. My tech assistant is Chinese; he's 26 years old and was one of my students back in the '90s—he came here with his parents when he was seven. Added to this is that my daughter's boyfriend, a recent graduate of NMC, is Korean! Well, as you can see, I am indeed in a position to understand the problem that some of the of the less sanguine interpretations of the newly proposed federal regulations may cause.

There needs to be a very close look at some of the things that any thought about blanket repatriation might entail. Uprooting families, or individuals either if it comes to that, is not a good idea. Economically it is not a good idea, socially it is not a good idea, and in terms of humanity it is really not a good idea.

Our long-term resident alien population is no threat to the United States. Losing their industry and society would be a major blow, a major threat to the well-being of the CNMI. It is imperative that those who will be making decisions relating to this issue in the near future think long and hard about the human cost that arbitrary implementation of applicable federal rules might accrue to us.

That there should be some revision in the way that immigration is practiced in these islands is a given. Post-911 security, even out here on the cutting edge of American culture, is a concern. But those long-term immigrants that have so long lived and contributed and prospered here should not be made to pay an inordinate price for the sake of cold and heartless regulations. Regulations that frankly make little sense when looked at objectively. Please, those of you who will come or are already here look at these things objectively, not bureaucratically. It is only right.

WEEK

From Page 1

decides that additional methods are justified, he must ensure that they strictly adhere to international and domestic norms for humane treatment, make those changes public, as far as possible, and guarantee congressional overseers the opportunity to study the changes.

Mr. Obama's actions also raise rather than answer questions about the transfer and detention of current and future terror suspects. How will the government handle those detained at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan? How and where would it process suspects turned over by third countries or captured by the United States abroad? What if, as seems likely, some detainees can neither be safely released nor successfully tried in federal or military court? These are nettlesome questions that Mr. Obama is right to take slowly.

The need for full information highlights the value of an action Mr. Obama has yet to take: appointment of a bipartisan committee to study the Bush administration's actions in the war on terrorism. It could evaluate the former administration's claims that "enhanced interrogation techniques" saved American lives. It also could study how the Bush administration got so disastrously off-track—and how future administrations could avoid a repetition, while still protecting Americans' safety.

(c) 2009, The Washington Post

TURN

From Page 1

Case in Point

So, say you're on a tourism-dependent island where the number of incoming visitors may soon be reduced; where people are leaving homes and apartments vacant, and where properties are selling low. You might ask yourself, where is the opportunity? Should I buy now and hold for the long term? Can I buy now to resell in the short term? For whom might this island still be a paradise? What new markets can I target? Who are the next wave of visitors or investors? What things will they need? What can I buy now to resell later?

Here's one idea heard on a recent radio interview which some are already capitalizing on: agriculture and food. Perhaps Saipan can be a source of fresh, locally grown, food for a coming population boom in neighboring Guam. What sorts of farm-grown items can I start to invest in now to be ahead of the pack when that becomes reality? What sort of company can I start now—even in this recession—that may be ideally positioned in a few short months or years? And when all is said done, perhaps you'll prove that one man's panic is another man's profit!

Remember, when everyone can see the opportunity, by then it's usually too late!—W.G.

And for the record…

You'll be in good company. History shows that FedEx (1973), CNN (1980), The Jim Henson Company (1958), and Microsoft (1975), were all started in recession years….and look at them now!

Note: *If you're a rabble rouser having trouble accessing the dhs.gov site, visit www.regulations.gov, download a copy of the regulations (Docket #: USCBP-2009-0001) and submit comments. You may also submit your comments and concerns to change.gov and whitehousse.gov*

According to the Saipan Tribune*, comments about the visa waiver regulations can be mailed during the next 50 days to: Border Security Regulations branch, Office of International Trade, Customs and Border Protection, Mint Annes 799 9th Street, NW, Washington DC 20001*

***Note**: For more tips on overcoming your fears, acting on your ideas, changing the game, and creating a passion-centered lifestyle, visit www.passionprofit.com!*

■ ■ ■

Until next week, remember, success is a journey, not a destination!

Walt F.J. Goodridge is author of 12 books including Turn Your Passion Into Profit. *Walt offers coaching and workshops to help people pursue and profit from their passions. Originally from the island of Jamaica, Walt has grown several successful businesses in the US, and now makes his home here in Saipan. To learn more about the Saipanpreneur Project and Walt's philosophy and formula visit www.saipanpreneur.com and www.passionprofit.com.*

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲86° ▼78°	▲86° ▼78°	▲86° ▼78°	▲86° ▼78°	▲86° ▼77°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Showers	▲85	▼75
Palau	Sunny	▲88	▼78
Yap	Showers	▲87	▼77
Chuuk	Showers	▲89	▼79
Pohnpei	Showers	▲85	▼77
Kosrae	Showers	▲88	▼78
Majuro	Thundershowers	▲83	▼77

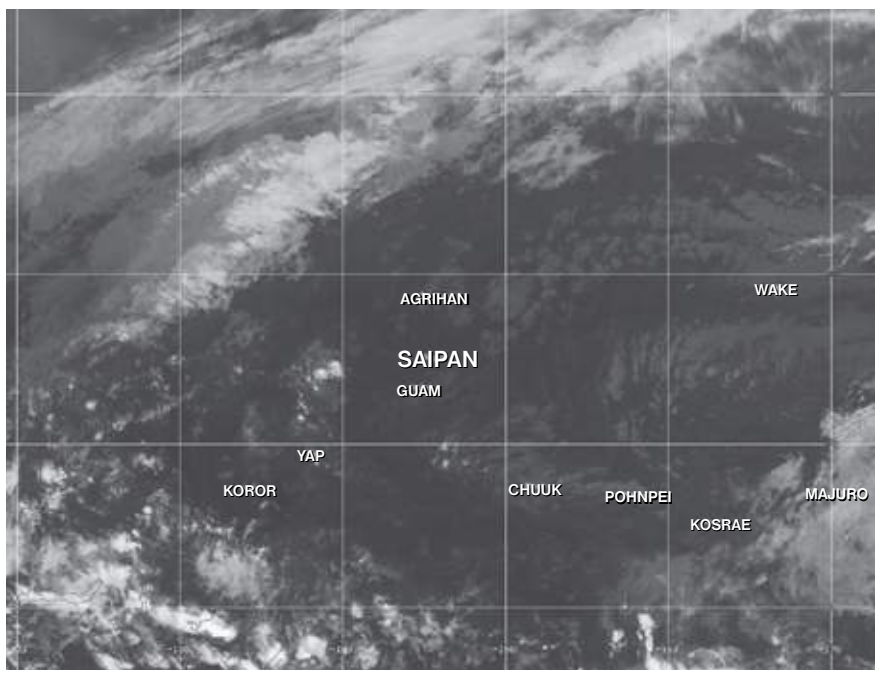
Around The Globe

Auckland	Dreary	▲71	▼61
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	▲45	▼25
Hong Kong	Mostly Cloudy	▲68	▼61
Honolulu	Showers	▲76	▼64
London	Showers	▲48	▼37
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	▲73	▼48
Manila	Showers	▲87	▼75
Melbourne	Hot	▲99	▼81
Miami	Partly Sunny	▲77	▼67
New York	Frozen Rain	▲36	▼25
Osaka	Sunny	▲49	▼40
Paris	Showers	▲45	▼35
Pusan	Sunny	▲52	▼42
Rome	Cloudy	▲51	▼34
Salem	Mostly Cloudy	▲49	▼33
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	▲59	▼45
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	▲45	▼28
Tokyo	Showers	▲52	▼37
Washington, DC	Rain	▲40	▼26

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
2:58 AM Today	Low Tide:	0.2 Feet
9:43 AM Today	High Tide:	1.9 Feet
3:28 PM Today	Low Tide:	1.0 Feet
8:28 PM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, TUESDAY, JAN. 27, 2009
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A low-level trough runs northward from 18N135E to beyond 25N at 137E. Scattered showers are found near the trough axis over Iwo To island north of a line from 16N130E to 22N136E to 24N150E. Converging winds south of an old shear line are producing scattered showers south of Minami Tori Shima but north of Wake Island or north of a line from 16N149E to 22N170E. Trade-wind convergence is combining with upper-level divergence to create scattered showers and a few thunderstorms south of Koror and Yap or south of a line from 7N130E to 2N150E. Scattered showers are seen south and east of Majuro within 200 miles of a line from EQ169E to 8N180.

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:47 AM	6:13 PM
Thursday	6:47 AM	6:14 PM
Friday	6:47 AM	6:14 PM
Saturday	6:46 AM	6:15 PM
Sunday	6:46 AM	6:15 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	7:51 AM	7:48 PM
Thursday	8:27 AM	8:37 PM
Friday	9:03 AM	9:26 PM
Saturday	9:39 AM	10:17 PM
Sunday	10:18 AM	11:10 PM

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2009

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Rota			
CO9597	11:50am	12:25pm	1,7
Saipan-Guam			
CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	Daily
CO9313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
CO9597	11:50am	1:20pm	1,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	2,3,4,5,6
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Narita			
NW 099	5:00am	7:35am	Daily
NW 078	8:20am	1:30pm	2,3,4,5,6,7
NW 075	4:55pm	7:30pm	Daily
Guam-Narita			
NW 73	4:10pm	7:00pm	Daily
NW 81	3:55pm	6:55pm	Daily
Saipan-Osaka			
OZ 119	4:00am	6:40am	1,4,6
NW 083	4:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
Guam-Osaka			
NW 79	4:45pm	7:35pm	Daily
Saipan-Nagoya			
NW 078	8:20am	11:05am	Daily
Guam-Nagoya			
NW 23	4:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Incheon			
OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 119	4:00am	11:25am	1,4,6 via Osaka
OZ 606	3:20pm	7:00pm	Daily
Saipan-Busan			
OZ 608	3:20am	6:50am	1,4,5,7
Saipan-Shanghai			
FM 844	2:50am	5:40am	2,6
Rota-Guam			
CO 9597	12:50pm	1:20pm	1,7
Guam-Palau			
CO 953	7:40pm	8:40pm	1,7
CO 893	5:50pm	6:50pm	3,5
Palau-Manila			
CO 893	7:35pm	9:10pm	3,5
Guam-Manila			
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	3,5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:50am	1,2,4,6,7
Nagoya-Manila			
NW 71	8:40pm	11:55pm	Daily
Incheon-Hongkong			
OZ 721	9:20am	12:00pm	Daily
OZ 723	7:45pm	10:35pm	Daily
OZ 7173	8:00pm	10:50pm	5,7
Narita-Manila			
NW 1	7:00pm	10:55pm	Daily

ARRIVALS

Rota-Saipan			
CO 9598	3:25am	4:00am	5,6
Guam-Saipan			
CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	1,2,3,4,7
CO9598	2:30am	4:00am	5,6 via Rota
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9600	10:20am	11:10am	Daily
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily
Narita-Saipan			
NW 076	10:15am	2:40pm	Daily
NW 077	6:25pm	1:20am+1	2,3,4,5,6,7
NW 100	8:45pm	1:10am+1	Daily
Narita-Guam			
NW 74	9:45am	2:20pm	Daily
NW 82	10:30am	3:10pm	Daily
Osaka-Saipan			
OZ 120	9:50pm	2:20am+1	3,5,7
NW 084	10:40am	3:05pm	Daily
Osaka-Guam			
NW 80	10:30am	3:00pm	Daily
Nagoya-Saipan			
NW 077	9:00pm	1:20am+1	Daily
Nagoya-Guam			
NW 24	10:00am	2:30pm	Daily
Incheon-Saipan			
OZ 605	9:00am	2:20pm	Daily
OZ 603	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ 120	7:10pm	2:20am+1	3,5,7 via Osaka
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6
Busan-Saipan			
OZ 607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	3,4,6,7
Shanghai-Saipan			
FM 843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1,5
Guam-Rota			
CO 9598	2:30am	3:00am	5,6
Palau-Guam			
CO 954	2:30am	5:25am	1,2
CO 892	2:35am	5:30am	4,6
Manila-Palau			
CO 892	10:10pm	1:50am+1	3,5
Manila-Guam			
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	3,5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:10pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7
Manila-Nagoya			
NW 72	6:30am	11:05am	Daily
Hongkong-Incheon			
OZ 724	12:30am	4:50am	Daily
OZ 7183	12:45am	5:05am	1,4,6
OZ 722	1:30pm	5:45pm	Daily
Manila-Narita			
NW 2	7:45am	12:40pm	Daily

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

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The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

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- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

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For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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‘Casino ship’ is scrapped

PHOTO BY DAVE T. HENLEY

The famous 301-foot passenger steamer SS Catalina lies mired in the mud in the harbor of Ensenada, Mexico. Despite attempts to raise funds to save the 85-year-old ship, it soon will be broken up into scrap.

By DAVID C. HENLEY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Frequent Pacific Islands traveler David C. Henley, who visited the CNMI, Guam, and China last year, is a foreign correspondent and former Western U.S. daily newspaper owner who covers international diplomatic, economic and military issues in Asia, Europe and Latin America. A former USC journalism professor, he is a member of the board of trustees of Chapman University in California and serves on the External Advisory Board of the University’s MA degree program in international studies.

The life of a decrepit, 85-year-old California passenger steamer that at one time was being considered for use as a floating gambling casino off the coast of the CNMI or other Pacific island groups is coming to an end. The historic, 301-foot SS *Catalina*, which carried approximately 25 million passengers in 9,807 voyages between the Port of Los Angeles and Catalina Island between 1924 and 1975, is to be cut up into scrap in late January or early February, according to *Saipan Tribune* sources. Taken out of service in 1975 due to prolonged labor disputes and increased competition from faster, hydrofoil vessels, the *Catalina* had a succession of owners who tried, unsuccessfully, to turn it into a restaurant, nightclub, or waterborne offshore casino. U.S. gambling interests put forth the suggestion that the *Catalina* might be renovated and towed to the CNMI or another Pacific location and turned into a maritime casino that would make daily “cruises to nowhere. Other suggested locations for the floating casino included Guam, the Philippines, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Indonesia.

But the presence of contradictory and restrictive gambling laws in these jurisdictions, the age and condition of the SS *Catalina* which could have made it dangerous for the ship to make a trans-Pacific crossing, and the lack of sufficient funds for the project caused it to be abandoned. When the U.S. Coast Guard threatened to seize the ship because of its rapidly-deteriorating condition, it was towed to the harbor in Ensenada, Mexico, about 95 miles south of San Diego, where a new owner announced plans to turn it into shops, a disco and a restaurant. That plan also foundered, the ship fell into further disrepair and in the late 1980s, it broke away from its moorings in the Ensenada harbor and partially sunk.

Plagued by vandals who critically damaged the *Catalina* as it lay half-submerged, the ship posed a menace to other vessels navigating the harbor. Also, Ensenada port authorities wanted the *Catalina* removed to make way for a massive new resort and marina. Efforts to raise funds to refloat the *Catalina* failed, and in early February Mexican officials said “enough is enough” and announced plans to demolish it and turn it into scrap.

The fabled SS *Catalina*, known as the “Great White Steamer,” was built by the Wrigley Co., the chewing gum firm that owned much of Catalina Island and was the summer home of the Wrigley Family. Making its maiden, 26-mile voyage from Los Angeles to Catalina on May 30, 1924, it hosted hundreds of motion stars during its career and featured dancing provided by “big bands” such as Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller during its two-hour crossings.

During World War II, it was taken out of passenger service, painted gray, given the number “FS-99,” and turned into U.S. Army transport that carried an estimated 850,000 troops throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Today, the rusting and forlorn SS *Catalina* awaits a demolition team that will cut it apart at an estimated cost of $650,000. Nautical historians and many former *Catalina* passengers contributed to a campaign to save the old ship and turn it into a floating museum, but lack of funds and a survey which showed it might fall to pieces if raised from the Ensenada Bay proved too daunting to keep the *Catalina* from the dismantlers’ hands. In a few weeks, nothing will remain of the great old ship that many years served as a famous passenger steamer and Army transport ship.

The marine monument

I am writing this in support of Lino Olopai’s letter to the editor the other day.

If someone had asked me what I thought of the marine monument, I would have said, “It sounds like a nice thing to do. What do Lino and the other permanent inhabitants of these islands think of the idea?”

It seems only right to simply ask them if they have any desire for a marine monument that will require them to give up ownership of so much of their birthright. Oh yeah, and no one else is giving up their land or possessions in the deal…just you!

If I may, what my friend Lino is experiencing is “The Oppression of the Good Intention”.

If you watch closely, the one common thread that runs through the well-intentioned action is the desire to “save the world” as long as someone else pays the bill, or sacrifices the land.

I’ve learned not to ask anyone to do something that I wouldn’t do, or to sacrifice what I wouldn’t sacrifice. That certainly tempers my enthusiasm to do good for those not asking for it.

I have a lot of personal experience with the consequences of this sort of thing. I witnessed this growing up in Micronesia, and with the Navajo and Choctaw Indians on the U.S. mainland.

The Indians were the “victims” of good intentions (and some bad intentions), and will forever deal with the consequences of naively allowing others to take care of them and their land.

The American government sold the American Indians on the benefits of working with the whites, and then broke *every* treaty they ever signed. Trust us, we’re with the government!

I am continually reminded of the admonition, “Anytime the government gives you anything, it was yours in the first place.” The missionaries that came from the mainland to “save” the Hawaiians from themselves never asked them if they wanted to be saved, they just assumed. After all, why wouldn’t someone who lives in Paradise, with no disease before the haoles came, with plentiful food, abundant wildlife, and magnificent weather not want to be saved by someone that couldn’t even speak their language and had no idea of their customs and traditions?

The oppression of the good intention (or maybe we should call it the “ignorant intention”) robbed the Hawaiians of their land, to the point that they became waifs in their own land. The missionaries that came to “save” them somehow ended up owning all the land.

Today you still see angry Hawaiians living on the beach because they can’t afford a house…in their own land.

This is why I’ve never argued with Article 12 on Saipan. Lino mentioned that a great deal of promises were made to gain acceptance of the deal. I’m glad that Lino has noticed (and others should take note), that if all of the sales pitches came true we would all be rich and have no problems…not one!

Anytime someone starts telling you how much this or that is going to save you, make you rich, cure your warts, etc., etc., etc., don’t just walk away—run away! What they’re telling you is a well-intentioned lie designed to get your money, land, or whatever is in question.

Now I’m not really accusing anyone of lying or being dishonest, just handling it badly. As so often happens, a lot of thought goes into the sales effort, but little thought goes into what happens after the sale.

Remember the words of Albert Einstein, “As we solve one problem we invariably create another”„and Saipan has seen it’s share of these problems.

Unfortunately, the “salesmen” of the marine monument don’t have to live with the results as they “solve this problem.” They can sit around, drinking wine, patting themselves in the back, and telling each other what a good job they did saving this spot of the world for future generations, while sitting in the mainland. Too bad they didn’t ask Lino and his generation.

It would have been a wonderful, respectful, caring thing to do and probably wouldn’t have affected the outcome at all…but will always be a stain on the monument.

Hopefully I’m wrong, but Lino, I wouldn’t wait too long for the U.S. government to give the land back to the CNMI, or for the people of the CNMI to revel in the too many promised benefits.

Ed Tudor, DVM
Sadog Tasi, Saipan

Broken promise?

Exactly three years ago on Jan 26, 2006, the *Saipan Tribune* came out with an article about the Fitial administration promising that utility rates will decrease and the fuel surcharge will be abolished within six months.

The article, titled ”Utility rates to go down in 6 months,” quoted press secretary Charles P. Reyes as saying that the new administration has set a goal to get tangible results at the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. within 180 days.

“We will bring the rates down and abolish the fuel surcharge fee- or if that can’t be done, reduce it significantly,” he said.

Well, happy anniversary to the Fitial administration for achieving further destruction of our power engines and bankrupting our public utilities.

There have been many organizational changes, millions wasted, backdoor hires, sole-source contracts, but still no solutions to our power woes, only destruction to our power engines.

Gregorio Cruz Jr.
Taotao Tano CNMI inc.

A sad new year for GTC

This letter is in response to the cover of Friday’s front page (Jan. 23, 2009), titled “Fitial overrules NMHC, cancels school project.” It makes me sad to see that many of the students will not be able to attend classes due to termite-infested classrooms. GTC, parents, and PSS who have worked so hard to get the block grant from NMHC now see their efforts literally stomped by our highest leader just makes me feel sick to my stomach. The people who worked hard for the efforts in improving the school and granted that money should determine its use. I don’t go to GTC, but I, and possibly many others who have read this article, probably shook their heads in disappointment.

Brittany S. Sablan
As Lito, Saipan

SELECTED

From Page 1

Moving on. As I look at the historical data of the value of the Fund’s invested assets in 2008 of $396 million, the values are back to about where they were 10 years ago. That’s not good.

The central government has contributed significantly to the Fund’s diminishment. First, by not only failing to meet its legal financial obligations but also by the very fact that it engineered the diversion of some employees from their previous retirement benefit plan to the voluntary contribution plan (for some employees). This resulted in the serious loss of employee and employer contributions of 1,156 individuals who would otherwise be contributing to the Fund’s benefit plan, not to mention the $4.1 million withdrawn when participating in the contribution plan. This will be discussed in greater detail in tomorrow’s continuation.

Currently, there are no new members joining the benefit plan and it is slowly dying as a result of direct and premeditated action by the central government. This fact alone makes the possibility of bond financing unlikely, not to mention the government’s poor credit rating.

Meanwhile, the government continues to think it’s possible to float a pension obligation bond to salvage the Fund. Have any “trial balloons” been sent up by the administration to obtain an independent assessment of this belief? Otherwise, the continued statements by those who—truth be known—probably have not ever invested a single dollar to purchase a bond do a great disservice to retirees by holding out the false hope for redemption as a method to right a wrong perpetrated on the members by the central government. Ask yourself one simple question: Would you purchase a CNMI government backed bond?

Finally, is there some way the “dead horse” idea of floating a pension obligation bond can finally be put out of its misery by burying it once and for all?

The government has underpaid its contribution to the Fund up to March 2006, then with the help of the Legislature gave itself a “no-pay” holiday for 18 months (FY ‘06-’07). How’s that for a financial cop-out on a contractual obligation? Do you think a bondholder would tolerate such inexcusable delays in payment? I don’t think so, and yet there are those in government who continue to deceive Fund members into thinking such bond financing is possible. If they continue to believe that, I have a whole bunch of stuff out back in the weeds I’d like to sell them.

Meanwhile, the government’s failure to pay its debt of $165 million, which continues to increase as time goes by month after month, has resulted in the Fund filing a lawsuit against the central government. The status hearing for this action is scheduled for Feb. 13 in the Superior Court.

To be continued.

Editor’s Note: For other essays by the author concerning the Retirement Fund from the point of view of an economist visit the Saipan Tribune’s archives.

Island Snapshots

CULTURAL DAY

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

Chuukita Girls entertain the crowd with island dances during Friday's Cultural Day at Hopwood Junior High School in San Antonio.

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

Senot Donald Mendiola, seated, chairman of the Cultural Day Committee at Hopwood Junior High School, is joined by students at the Cultural Day grounds on Friday.

Far right, students in traditional Carolinian headdress pose for the camera while waiting for live song and dance performances to start.

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

Right, two members of a cultural dance group wait for their turn to perform at Hopwood Junior High School's Cultural Day on Friday.

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

CATHOLIC SCHOOL SPIRIT

Far left, Mount Carmel School's Frank Jr., Cameron, Delfin and a teacher clean up the premises of the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library as part of the school's Catholic School Spirit. This is the 4th year that MCS students have been doing this project.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Left, students of Mount Carmel School pose in front of the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library after the cleanup activity. The event was held as part of the school's Catholic School Spirit.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CATHOLIC SCHOOL WEEK

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Eskuelan San Francisco de Borja students on Rota show their Catholic School Week spirit by displaying their banners at the Pinatang Beach Park in Songsong Village. From left, Randee Jo Barcinas, Maricel Atalig, Fortunato Manglona, Jr. and PRTI DARE/GUTS Jr. NBA/WNBA student honoree Chuck A. Barcinas.

DAY TRIP

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

University of Loyola at CNMI nursing students, family, and friends go on a day trip to the island of Managaha on Jan. 17, 2009.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Students and friends of the University of Loyola at CNMI pose for a souvenir picture during a day trip to the island of Managaha on Jan. 17, 2009.

Business

Job-killing recession racks up more layoff victims

WASHINGTON (AP)—The recession is killing jobs at an alarming pace, with tens of thousands of new layoffs announced Monday by some of the biggest names in American business—Pfizer, Caterpillar and Home Depot.

More pink slips, pay freezes and other hits are expected to slam workers in the months ahead as companies desperately look for ways to survive.

"We're just seeing the tip of the iceberg—the big firms," said Rebecca Braeu, economist at John Hancock Financial Services. "There's certainly other firms beneath them that will lay off workers as quickly or even quicker."

Looking ahead, economists predicted a net loss of at least 2 million jobs—possibly more—this year even if President Barack Obama's $825 billion package of increased government spending and tax cuts is enacted. Last year, the economy lost a net 2.6 million jobs, the most since 1945, though the labor force has grown significantly since then.

AP

The sign for a Sprint store is shown in San Francisco, Monday, Jan. 26, 2009. Faced with persistent subscriber losses and questions about its long-term prospects, Sprint Nextel Corp. is slashing its already shrinking work force by 8,000 people as it seeks to cut annual costs by $1.2 billion.

The unemployment rate, now at a 16-year high of 7.2 percent, could hit 10 percent or higher later this year or early next year, under some analysts' projections.

Obama called on Congress Monday to speedily enact his recovery plan, warning that the nation can't afford "distractions" or "delays."

With the recession expected to drag on through much of this year, more damage will be inflicted on both companies and workers.

The mounting toll was visible Monday as roughly 40,000 more U.S. workers got the grim news.

Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc., which is buying rival drugmaker Wyeth in a $68 billion deal, and Sprint Nextel Corp., the country's third-largest wireless provider, said they each will slash 8,000 jobs.

Home Depot Inc., the biggest home improvement retailer in the U.S., will get rid of 7,000 jobs, and General Motors Corp. said it will cut 2,000 jobs at plants in Michigan and Ohio because of slow sales.

"We are seeing no improvement in labor market conditions," said Sal Guatieri, senior economist at BMO Capital Markets Economics. "This year could be as bad as last year in terms of layoffs."

Retail sales forecast to fall further in '09

NEW YORK (AP)—The nation's retailers had a rough 2008, but this year will likely be even scarier, according to a sales forecast released Tuesday from the world's largest retail trade organization.

Retailers are expected to record a 0.5 percent drop in revenue in 2009, the first annual decline in three decades and perhaps much longer, according to a National Retail Federation forecast released Tuesday.

That's well below the modest 1.4 percent gain they recorded for 2008.

Massive layoffs, slumping home prices and tight credit are keeping shoppers tightfisted.

The NRF estimated that retail sales for the first half of 2009 will fall 2.5 percent. Then, they'll show a 1.1 percent decline in the third quarter and rebound to a 3.6 percent increase in the fourth quarter, aided by an anticipated government economic stimulus.

Another factor that should help sales figures for late 2009 is that sales were so dismal in the fourth quarter of 2008 - declining 1.7 percent, according to Rosalind Wells, NRF's chief economist.

For November and December combined, sales fell 2.8 percent, well below the association's forecast of a 2.2 percent gain.

"Most of the consumer behavior we saw in 2008 will continue well into this year," said Wells

She said she's never seen an annual decline in the 30-plus years she has tracked retail sales. She started with NRF in 1995 but had previously worked as J.C. Penney's chief economist from 1978 to 1988.

NRF's retail sales figures exclude business from automobile sales, gas stations and restaurants.

Senate confirms Geithner as treasury secretary

WASHINGTON (AP)—New York Federal Reserve Bank President Timothy Geithner won confirmation Monday as President Barack Obama's treasury secretary despite personal tax lapses that turned more than a third of the Senate against him. Obama immediately put him to work fixing an economy in "dangerous jeopardy."

"We can't waste a day," Obama said, standing beside Geithner as he was sworn into office by Vice President Joe Biden.

The Senate voted 60-34 to put Geithner in charge of the administration's economic team as it races to halt the worst financial slide in generations. The swearing-in followed less than an hour later, the administration seeking to emphasize that it was wasting no time in trying to address the financial crisis.

Obama said there had been a "devastating loss in trust and confidence" in the U.S. economy.

In his remarks, Geithner said the new administration would work first to stabilize the financial system and get the economy growing again and then would move to reform the system.

"We are at a point of maximum challenge for our economy and our country," Geithner said to a standing-room only audience in Treasury Department's ornate Cash Room. On hand were Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke and former Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers, now director of Obama's National Economic Council.

Dividends being cut at fastest pace in 50 years

NEW YORK (AP)—Dividends are being cut at the fastest pace in at least 50 years, and many of the reductions are coming from U.S. companies investors have been relying on to provide income during the recession.

Already this year, seven companies in the Standard & Poor's 500 index have decreased their dividends, removing some $12 billion from shareholders' pockets in the coming months. On Monday, Pfizer became the latest blue-chip company to do so.

These cuts serve up another hit to shareholders who have already been battered by the steep declines in the stock market. That is especially true of retirees, who tend to be attracted to so-called "widows and orphans" stocks that provide them with a steady cash flow.

If the trend continues, this will be the worst year for dividend cuts since 1958, when annual payments fell by 8.4 percent, according to new research from S&P.

"It is easy to say this is going to be the worst in 50 years, but the bigger question is whether it is going to be much worse than that," said Howard Silverblatt, senior index analyst at S&P.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Caterpillar fourth-qtr profit falls 32 pct

Caterpillar Inc.'s fourth-quarter profit dropped 32 percent as the global economic slowdown sapped demand for heavy equipment, forcing the company to lower its 2009 profit expectations and make further job cuts that will ultimately wipe out 20,000 positions. Earnings for the world's largest maker of mining and construction machinery fell far short of expectations as customers pulled back on purchases of equipment used to mine quarries and help build homes, highways and offices. Demand hit a wall in the last month of the year, weighed down by the forces of recession: slumping commodity prices, tight credit markets and weak home building. Caterpillar, an economic bellwether and component of the Dow Jones industrial average, reported fourth-quarter earnings of $661 million, or $1.08 per share, on Monday, down from $975 million, or $1.50 per share, a year earlier. Overall sales rose 6 percent to $12.92 billion. ***(AP)***

American Express earnings fall 79 percent

NEW YORK (AP)—American Express Co. said Monday that its profit tumbled 79 percent in the fourth quarter as cardmembers cut back their spending amid the harsh economy and the company took a big severance-related charge. This marks the fifth-straight quarter of profit declines at American Express—a credit card company that has prided itself on catering to a more affluent clientele—proving that few have been spared from the pain of the recession. The New York-based company also said it expects spending to continue to slow in 2009, and forecast for higher delinquencies and loan losses as consumers and businesses battle worsening economic trends. The outlook echoes remarks made by fellow credit card issuer Capital One Financial Corp. last week. For the final three months of the year, AmEx earned $172 million, or 15 cents per share, compared with earnings of $831 million, or 71 cents per share, a year earlier.

GateHouse, NY Times Co. settle copyright lawsuit

BOSTON (AP)—A settlement has been reached in a closely watched lawsuit brought after The Boston Globe's Web site began posting headlines and lead sentences from another publisher's site, a court official said Monday. A clerk for U.S. District Judge William Young said GateHouse Media Inc., which owns several Massachusetts dailies, and The New York Times Co., the parent company of The Boston Globe, reached an agreement during the weekend. The deal came just before the case was set to go to trial Monday in federal court. Details of the settlement were not immediately announced. Lawyers for GateHouse and the New York Times Co. declined to comment Monday morning. Catherine Mathis, a spokeswoman for the New York Times Co., did not immediately return a call seeking comment. News organizations and bloggers had said the case could have far-reaching implications for determining how much content one news organization or Web site can use from another.

STOCK Portfolio

ASIAN MARKETS

AUSTRALIA 3,392.30 Up 92.00 (+2.79%)

HONG KONG 12,578.60 Down 79.39 (-0.63%)

JAKARTA 1,339.34 Up 23.75 (+1.81%)

TOKYO 8,061.07 Up 378.93 (+4.93%)

K. LUMPUR 872.69 Down 6.33 (-0.72%)

MANILA 1,880.81 Up 10.89 (+0.58%)

SINGAPORE 1,685.23 Up 23.54 (+1.38%)

SEOUL 1,093.40 Down 22.83 (-2.05%)

BANGKOK 439.09 Up 2.36 (+0.54%)

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW 8,116.03 +38.47

S&P 836.57 +4.62

NASDAQ 1,489.46 +12.17

MONEY MARKET

Australian Dollar	1.5064
British Pound	0.7008
Canadian Dollar	1.2249
Chinese Yuan	6.8442
Euro	0.7579
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7581
Indian Rupee	48.8450
Indonesian Rupiah	11,250.0000
Japanese Yen	89.4150
Malaysian Ringgit	3.6050
New Zealand Dollar	1.8884
Philippine Peso	47.0700
Singapore Dollar	1.4979
South Korean Won	1,391.0000
Swiss Franc	1.1562
Taiwan Dollar	33.7300
Thailand Baht	34.9150

In U.S. dollar terms

Source: Associated Press

Nation

Obama orders push to cleaner, more efficient cars

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Barack Obama opened an ambitious, double-barreled assault on global warming and U.S. energy woes Monday, moving quickly toward rules requiring cleaner-running cars that guzzle less gas—a must, he said, for "our security, our economy and our planet."

He also vowed to succeed where a long line of predecessors had failed in slowing U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

Starting his second week in office, Obama took a major step toward allowing California and other states to target greenhouse gases through more stringent auto emission standards, and he ordered new federal rules directing automakers to start making more fuel-efficient cars as required by law.

The auto industry responded warily. Reducing planet-warming emissions is a great idea, carmakers and dealers said, but they expressed deep concern about costly regulations and conflicting state and federal rules at a time when people already are not buying cars. U.S. auto sales plunged 18 percent in 2008.

And industry analysts said the changes could cost consumers thousands of dollars—for smaller, "greener" cars.

Obama on Monday directed the Environmental Protection Agency to review whether California and more than a dozen states should be allowed to impose tougher auto emission standards on carmakers to fight greenhouse gas emissions. The Bush administration had blocked the efforts by the states, which account for about half of the nation's auto sales.

AP

President Barack Obama smiles as he prepares to sign an executive order dealing with energy independence and climate change, Monday, Jan. 26, 2009, in the East Room of the White House in Washington.

The new president also said his administration would issue new fuel-efficiency requirements to cover 2011 model year vehicles.

Obama acknowledged the worries of automakers but said urgent action was needed nonetheless. He said, "Our goal is not to further burden an already struggling industry. It is to help America's automakers prepare for the future."

Officials: Family planning funding may be dropped

WASHINGTON (AP)—House Democrats are likely to jettison family planning funds for the low-income from an $825 billion economic stimulus bill, officials said late Monday, following a personal appeal from President Barack Obama at a time the administration is courting Republican critics of the legislation.

Several officials said a final decision was expected on Tuesday, coinciding with Obama's scheduled visit to the Capitol for separate meetings with House and Senate Republicans.

The provision has emerged as a point of contention among Republicans, who criticize it as an example of wasteful spending that would neither create jobs nor otherwise improve the economy.

Under the provision, states no longer would be required to obtain federal permission to offer family planning services—including contraceptives—under Medicaid, the health program for the low-income.

Democrats considered the politically-potent change as congressional budget experts estimated it would take slightly longer for the overall legislation to achieve an impact on the economy than the administration projects.

The Congressional Budget Office said the economy would feel the effects of almost two-thirds of the money over the next year and a half. The administration claims 75 percent of the funding would be absorbed in that period of time, and Obama has pledged that the bill he signs will meet that target and either save or create up to 4 million jobs.

While the debate surrounding the overall impact of the measure pits economists and their statistics against one another, Republicans quickly seized on the family planning money as evidence that the Democrats were advancing an agenda that went beyond the economy.

Ill. Senate begins trial as governor hits TV shows

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP)—Gov. Rod Blagojevich's impeachment trial opened on Monday with a vacant chair reserved for the governor, who boycotted the proceedings and instead spent the day on the TV talk-show circuit in New York, complaining he is being railroaded.

"The fix is in," Blagojevich declared on ABC's "Good Morning America."

As the Illinois Senate assembled for the first impeachment trial of a U.S. governor in more than 20 years, David Ellis, the House-appointed prosecutor, told the chamber that he will show that Blagojevich "repeatedly and utterly abused the powers and privileges of his office."

In one of his first orders of business, Ellis won approval from the Senate to summon as a witness an FBI agent who oversaw the profanity-laden wiretaps that led to Blagojevich's arrest on corruption charges last month.

With Blagojevich refusing to present a defense, Illinois senators could vote within days on whether to oust the 52-year-old Democrat on a variety of charges, including allegations he tried to sell the U.S. Senate seat left vacant by President Barack Obama.

State senators maintained the trial will be fair, despite Blagojevich's attacks on the process.

"We all took an oath to do justice according to the law. I know that everyone is taking the matter seriously and that no one will stand in the way of justice," said Senate Minority Leader Christine Radogno, a Republican. In live appearances Monday on "Good Morning America" and "The View," Blagojevich said some of his most inflammatory remarks from the wiretaps had been taken out of context. But when pressed, he would not elaborate, and he insisted he had done nothing illegal.

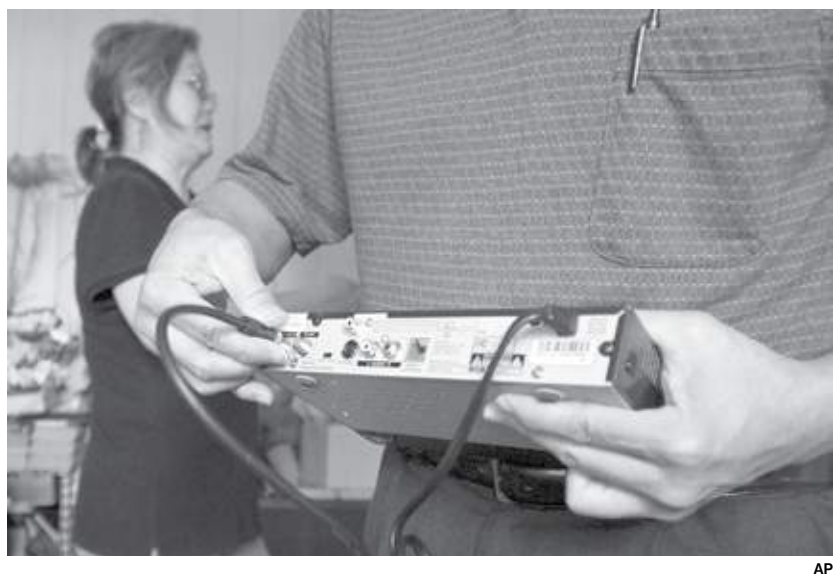
Senate OKs 4-month delay to digital TV changeover

WASHINGTON (AP—The Senate on Monday voted unanimously to postpone the upcoming transition from analog to digital television broadcasting by four months to June 12—setting the stage for Congress to pass the proposal as early as Tuesday.

Monday's Senate vote is a big victory for the Obama administration and Democrats in Congress, who have been pushing for a delay amid growing concerns that too many Americans won't be ready for the currently scheduled Feb. 17 changeover.

The Nielsen Co. estimates that more than 6.5 million U.S. households that rely on analog television sets to pick up over-the-air broadcast signals could see their TV sets go dark next month if the transition is not postponed.

"Delaying the upcoming DTV switch is the right thing to do," said Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., author of the bill to push back the deadline. "I firmly believe that our nation is not yet ready to make this transition at this time."



AP

Earl Mostoles, right, helps Arlene Sato set up her digital receiver for her old analog television, in Honolulu, Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2009.

ACROSS THE NATION

Ice storm blacks out part of Plains, glazes roads

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—A growing ice storm has spread across a large section of Oklahoma, knocking out electrical service to hundreds of people and making roads hazardous. The National Weather Service posted ice storm and winter storm warnings Monday for parts of Oklahoma as well as sections of Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Kentucky and southern slices of Indiana and Illinois. The weather service said up to an inch of ice was possible in places. At least one traffic death was blamed on icy roads in Oklahoma. Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry declared a state of emergency for all 77 of the state's counties, paving the way for seeking federal assistance for ice storm damage. Oklahoma utilities said more than 1,200 customers were blacked out by the ice and numerous schools closed.

Octuplets born 'screaming and kicking' in Calif.

BELLFLOWER, Calif. (AP)—A woman gave birth to eight babies in Southern California on Monday, the world's second live-born set of octuplets. The mother, who was not identified, gave birth to six boys and two girls weighing between 1 pound, 8 ounces and 3 pounds, 4 ounces, doctors at Kaiser Permanante Medical Center told The Associated Press. The hospital had scheduled a Caesarean section for seven babies, but doctors were surprised by the eighth. "My eyes got to be the size of saucers," Dr. Karen Maples told The Los Angeles Times, explaining her reaction to the last birth. "We just went on and delivered the babies." She said the babies were in stable condition and would probably remain in the hospital for at least two months. She said the mother should be released in a week. Kaiser spokeswoman Myra Suarez said she could not release any information about the mother, including her condition or whether she used fertility drugs. Such drugs make multiple births more likely. "They are all doing the best they can," Suarez told the AP.

Suspect's note doesn't explain Portland shootings

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—The suspect in a shooting rampage outside an under-21 nightclub in downtown Portland left a note giving his car and PlayStation 3 to a roommate and said he was sorry but gave no motive, police said Monday. Two girls died in the shootings Saturday night outside The Zone club, and seven other people were hurt. Many were exchange students at the club to celebrate a birthday. In the note police released Monday, Erik S. Ayala, 24, meticulously lists off his bank account information and how his roommate can get top dollar for the game station. "I'm sorry to put all this on you buddy, good luck," Ayala wrote. Portland homicide Sgt. Richard Austria said the investigation is continuing into what may have prompted Ayala. "We are less than 48 hours into this, so there's a lot of information still to be learned," he said. "What we do know is this was not a targeted incident." Police said there appeared to be no link between Ayala and the victims.

Asia

Japan to tourists: Please don't lick the tuna

AP

Foreign tourists watch a morning auction at Tsukiji fish market in Tokyo, Monday, Jan. 19, 2009.

TOKYO (AP)—Tourists are known for acting silly, but licking the tuna?

Overwhelmed by a growing number of misbehaving tourists, Tokyo fishmongers banned all visitors from one of the city's most popular tourist destinations—the pre-dawn tuna auctions at the world's largest seafood market.

The ban, imposed during the peak New Year buying season, was front-page news before it was lifted last week. Now, the tourists are back, but the debate goes on: Can tourists be trusted around the tuna?

"We understand that the sight of hundreds of frozen tuna looks unique and interesting for foreign tourists," said Yoshiaki Takagi, deputy director of the market. "But they have to understand the Tsukiji market is a professional place, not an amusement park."

One of the more notorious recent cases was that of a tipsy British tourist—caught on tape by a Japanese TV crew—who licked the head of a frozen tuna and patted its gill. Two others, also caught on video, rode around on a cart used by wholesalers. "Get out! Get out!" an irate market official shouted in English.

"Tuna is a very expensive fish," Takagi said. "One tuna can easily cost more than 1 million yen ($11,000). But some tourists touch them and even try to hug them."

Fed up, the market decided to impose the ban.

UN: Trapped civilians in Sri Lanka war a 'crisis'

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)—More than 150,000 civilians are trapped in a rapidly shrinking jungle battlefield as Sri Lanka hopes to crush a 25-year-old separatist movement.

The top U.N. official in the country said Monday their lives are in serious danger.

"There's so many people, so many guns and such a high intensity of fighting," U.N. resident coordinator Neil Buhne told The Associated Press. "There have been many civilians killed over the last two days. ... It's really a crisis now."

The huge population of trapped, uprooted civilians is living in makeshift shelters under desperate conditions in the last scrap of rebel-controlled territory, Buhne said. They have been without U.N. food aid since Jan. 16, when aid convoys were no longer allowed.

The civilians are in the crossfire between tens of thousands of advancing government troops fresh from capturing the Tamil Tigers' last stronghold over the weekend, and an unknown number of rebels who are so committed to their cause that some wear suicide vials of cyanide around their necks in case of capture.

The Tamil Tigers have fought since 1983 to create a separate state for minority Tamils, who have suffered decades of marginalization at the hands of governments controlled by the Sinhalese majority. More than 70,000 people have been killed in the civil war.

Human rights groups and diplomats have expressed growing concerns about the safety of the trapped civilians, whose numbers are estimated at 150,000 to nearly 400,000. The government says the number is far lower.

Indonesian Muslims banned from practicing yoga

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—Muslims in Indonesia are banned from practicing yoga that contains Hindu rituals like chanting, the country's top Islamic body said Monday, echoing concerns by some religious groups elsewhere about its effect on their faith.

Though not legally binding, most devout Muslims will likely adhere to the ruling because ignoring a fatwa, or religious decree, is considered a sin.

The decision in the world's most populous Muslim state follows similar edicts in Malaysia and Egypt as the ancient Indian exercise gained popularity worldwide in recent years.

Cleric Ma'ruf Amin said the Ulema Council issued its ruling over the weekend after investigators visited gyms and private yoga classes across the sprawling nation. Amir said those performing yoga purely for health or sport reasons will not be affected.

But yoga practitioners immediately criticized the decision.

"They shouldn't be worrying about this," said Jamilah Konny Fransiska, a yoga teacher on the northern island of Batam, adding that all of her students perform yoga solely to strengthen their bodies and minds.

"There is little or no spiritual element to it," she said. "The clerics should be focusing only on purely religious matters, not this."

Yoga—a blend of physical and mental exercises aimed at integrating mind, body and spirit—has become so popular in the United States that many public schools have started offering it as part of their physical education programs.

But there, too, yoga has come under fire, with some Christian fundamentalists arguing its Hindu roots conflict with their own teachings.

World

Iceland's govt collapses amid financial mess

REYKJAVIK, Iceland (AP)—Iceland's coalition government collapsed on Monday after an unprecedented wave of public dissent, plunging the island nation into political turmoil as it seeks to rebuild an economy shattered by the global financial crisis.

Prime Minister Geir Haarde resigned and disbanded the government he's led since 2006. Haarde was unwilling to meet the demands of his coalition partner, the Social Democratic Alliance Party, which insisted on choosing a new prime minister in exchange for keeping the coalition intact.

"I really regret that we could not continue with this coalition, I believe that that would have been the best result," Haarde told reporters.

Iceland has been mired in crisis since October, when the country's banks collapsed under the weight of debts amassed during years of rapid expansion.

Thousands of angry citizens have joined noisy protests against the government's handling of the economy, clattering pots and kitchen utensils in what some commentators called the "Saucepan Revolution."

The value of the country's krona currency has plummeted, hitting many Icelanders who took out special loans denoted in foreign currencies for new homes and cars during the boom years. In addition, Iceland must repay billions of dollars to Europeans who held accounts with subsidiaries of collapsed Icelandic banks.

Haarde's government has nationalized banks and negotiated about $10 billion in bailout loans from the International Monetary Fund and individual countries.

Haarde—a fiscal conservative with degrees from the University of Minnesota, Brandeis and Johns Hopkins—is suffering from cancer and has announced he would not seek another term. He called early elections last week, following the mass protests by Icelanders upset at soaring unemployment and rising prices.

UN's role in Gaza rises among the rubble

JEBALIYA REFUGEE CAMP, Gaza Strip (AP)—Crouching against piled mattresses in a room crammed with refugees, Bissan Abu al-Eish focused on her homework, blocking out the relentless shrieks of dozens of toddlers and the stench of overflowing latrines.

"I'm so happy to be studying," said the 9-year-old girl, bent over the new textbook she received this weekend when classes resumed for 200,000 Gaza children at United Nations facilities.

Beyond being schooled by the U.N., Abu al-Eish and her seven siblings eat the agency's food, wear its clothing and now live in one of its buildings after their own house was leveled during Israeli bombardments on Gaza.

Hamas may be politically in charge of the Gaza Strip, but it's to the U.N.'s relief agency that the majority of the 1.4 million Gazans turn for health care, garbage collection, food assistance and just about every other service usually provided by a state.

With much of the territory devastated by Israel's latest military offensive, the agency's job is bound to get even bigger.

Many expect the U.N.'s agency for Palestinians to take the lead in reconstruction, though its role is currently limited to the refugee camps that house more than 1 million of Gaza's population. The U.N. spearheading efforts to rebuild Gaza could open a door to international donors, many of whom don't want to give Hamas money because the group doesn't recognize Israel and is considered a terror organization by the U.S. and European Union.

It is estimated that $2 billion is needed to repair the 21,000 homes damaged or destroyed, along with factories and government buildings, in the three-week Israeli attack to end Hamas' rocket-firing. Fundraising has hardly begun, and the question of how the money will be funneled remains unanswered.

WORLD BRIEFS

Iraqi prime minister expects faster US pullout

BAGHDAD (AP)—Iraq's prime minister said Monday he believes the U.S. will withdraw its troops more quickly than the three-year timeline set down in a U.S.-Iraq security agreement. The U.S., meanwhile, suffered its biggest single loss of life in months when two helicopters crashed, killing four service members. An agreement negotiated under former President George W. Bush's administration called for U.S. combat troops to withdraw from Baghdad and other cities by the end of June, with all American forces out of the country by the end of 2011. President Barack Obama campaigned on a promise to remove all combat troops within 16 months and has asked the Pentagon to plan for "a responsible military drawdown from Iraq." With planning under way, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki told a political rally south of Baghdad that he believes the end of the U.S. mission "will be brought forward" and that Iraq must bolster its own forces to meet the challenge after the Americans leave.

Pentagon: Gitmo prisoner releases not fail safe

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)—The re-emergence of two former Guantanamo Bay prisoners as al-Qaida terrorists in the past week won't likely change U.S. policy on transfers to Saudi Arabia, the Pentagon said Monday. More than 100 Saudis have been repatriated from the U.S. military's prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to Saudi Arabia, where the government puts them through a rehabilitation program designed to encourage them to abandon Islamic extremism and reintegrate into civilian life. The online boasts by two of these men that they have joined al-Qaida in Yemen underscore that the Saudi system isn't fail safe, the Pentagon said. A U.S. counterterrorism official in Washington confirmed the men had been Guantanamo detainees. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to disclose that fact on the record.

US envoy predicts 'direct diplomacy' with Iran

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—President Barack Obama's administration will engage in "direct diplomacy" with Iran, the newly installed U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said Monday. Not since before the 1979 Iranian revolution are U.S. officials believed to have conducted wide-ranging direct diplomacy with Iranian officials. But U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice warned that Iran must meet U.N. Security Council demands to suspend uranium enrichment before any talks on its nuclear program. "The dialogue and diplomacy must go hand in hand with a very firm message from the United States and the international community that Iran needs to meet its obligations as defined by the Security Council. And its continuing refusal to do so will only cause pressure to increase," she told reporters during a brief question-and-answer session.

Campus Life

Manta Rays hold encampment at Ladder Beach

Saipan Southern High School hosted their annual local encampment on Jan. 16-18, 2009 at Ladder Beach—which was the first time the encampment was held at the site. Cadets had the opportunity to experience a rare and exciting training such as rappelling together with Education Commissioner Dr. Rita Sablan. The Manta Ray Battalion cadets were also able to do their water physical training, rope bridge, first-aid challenge, leadership course, and a lot more physical activities. Here are pictures from the event:

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Dr. Rita Sablan, the Commissioner of Education, participates in the rappelling exercise.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

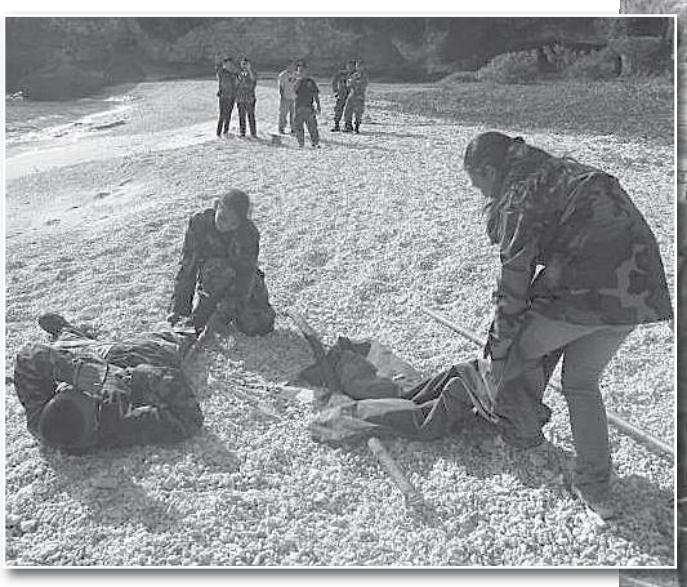
Members of Saipan Southern High School's Manta Ray Battalion conduct their water physical training.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Cadets participate in one of the activities called rope bridge.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Cadets of the Manta Ray Battalion road marching to the camp site at Ladder Beach.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Cadets learn how to do first-aid right by the beach.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Listening skills and trust is what these cadets need for this leadership course.

Another job well done by GCA students at the PGFC

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The PGFC winners of Grace Christian Academy pose for a victory picture after the event.

Congratulations once again to the PGFC winners of Grace Christian Academy. Three of the new interns at GCA from North Central University, Minnesota had the opportunity to volunteer at the Primary Grades Forensic Conference as judges, which was held at Dandan Elementary School on Jan. 24, 2009. They felt very privileged to be a part of the conference. They were very pleased to see such talented competitors, especially ones from their own school. It was quite an experience for them and they look forward to hearing the future results of the conference.

K-2 Division

Readers Forum- Masters A
- Claudilyn Lacbayo - 1st Place
- Clark Birmingham - 4th Place

Readers Forum- Masters B
- Hannah Palacios - 3rd Place
- Matt Jason - 5th Place

Readers Forum- A
- Haram Na - 3rd Place

Readers Forum- B
- Heather Angel Pangilinan - 2nd Place
- Elijah Joshua Pajarillaga- 3rd Place

Impromptu Speaking- A
- Arvin Dayao - 1st Place
- Bryant Bryce Cayabyab - 4th Place
- Claudilyn Lacbayo - 5th Place

Impromptu Speaking- B
- Martin Angelo Pangilinan - 1st Place
- Matt Jason Moran- 3rd Place
- Tae Yong Kim - 5th Place

Choral Speaking B
- Karena Lei Torres - 5th Place
- Jasmine Phan - 5th Place
- Andrei Ferrer - 5th Place
- Marcelo Masilungan Jr. - 5th Place

3-5 Division

Readers Forum- Masters B
- Jasmine Michelle Gortayo - 1st Place

Readers Forum- Masters C
- Peter Luis Camacho - 1st Place

Readers Forum- Masters D
- Cameron Boyer - 1st Place
- Yasmin Marcelo - 3rd Place

Readers Forum- Masters E
- Vyela Cervera - 2nd Place

Readers Forum- A
- Kenichi Shirata - 4th Place

Readers Forum- B
- Ha Young Joseph Seo - 5th Place

Readers Forum- D
- Paula Rose Talibong - 3rd Place

Humorous Interpretation- A
- Cameron Boyer - 1st Place

Impromptu Speaking- A
- Peter Luis Camacho - 1st Place
- Dianne Arnold - 2nd Place

Impromptu Speaking- B
- Camille Masilungan - 1st Place
- Kenichi Shirata - 3rd Place
- Mark Daniel Versoza - 4th Place
- Yeram Grace Na - 5th Place

Duo Interpretation- B
- Mulan Ta - 4th Place
- Jenifer Yokoyama - 4th Place

Teachers/Coaches

Miss Melissa Harper - K5
Mrs. Leah Garfil - 1st Grade
Mrs. Kate Ganapin - 2nd Grade
Miss Kelly Dawe - 3rd Grade

PGFC Volunteer Judges

Mr. Mark Birmingham
Mrs. Mirasol Dayao
Mrs. Rose Shirata
Mrs. Mary Ann Sacramento
Miss Marites Gortayo
Mr. Renato Macatangay
Miss Alicia Gray
Miss Laura Vagle
Miss Rachel Wolsteinholm

GCA PGFC Coordinator

Mrs. Esther Manzano

Life & Style

Weaver says 'Prayers' for Lifetime

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Here's big-screen and stage veteran Sigourney Weaver in a most unexpected place: A made-for-TV movie on Lifetime Television.

The cable network, once known for "Golden Girls" reruns and tawdry telefilms, has recently scored critical and ratings success with its series "Army Wives," and last year's original movie "Coco Chanel" earned both Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild nominations for star Shirley MacLaine.

Now another A-list feature-film star is taking the lead role in "Prayers for Bobby," arguably the network's loftiest and most ambitious production yet.

"I'll admit I was first surprised by their involvement in this," Weaver said, while promoting the film at a hotel earlier this month. "But the way they've supported this from start to finish—and it's been a long for them—is proof that they're serious about changing the face of the network."

Weaver

Lifetime's reach was another draw for Weaver: "More people will see this in one airing than may ever see some of the features I've done. And there's a message here that a lot of people need to hear."

Based on a true story and the book by Leroy Aarons, "Prayers for Bobby" is about Mary Griffith, played by Weaver, a devoutly Christian mother who disowns her gay son over his sexuality. Griffith blames herself for her son's subsequent suicide, and finds solace not in her church, but PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), and has since become a gay activist.

The role wasn't an easy one for Weaver.

"I think all I did was think about how much I love my daughter and if she had something that was weighing on her, that she felt was bigger than her and that she wouldn't be able to come to me and have me listen," Weaver said, getting teary. "I'm not saying it's not frightening for the parents. I think it would be very frightening. I think all parents do is try to keep their kids from leading lives that are dangerous or unsafe. And this is a tough life."

Weaver has kept in touch with the real-life Griffith, whom she met during production.

"One of her grandchildren just came out who is 15," Weaver said, getting misty again. "And Bobby would be so proud because it was greeted with such unconditional love from the entire family and they said, 'We're proud of you.'"

"Prayers for Bobby" premiered over the weekend and will be replayed Tuesday night (Jan. 26) on Lifetime.

The horror! Neil Gaiman's spooky book wins Newbery

NEW YORK (AP)—Oh, the horror: Neil Gaiman has received the top prize for children's literature: The John Newbery Medal.

"I am so wonderfully befuddled," the best-selling author said Monday after winning the 88th annual Newbery for "The Graveyard Book," a spooky, but (he says) family friendly story about a boy raised by a vampire, a werewolf and a witch.

"I never really thought of myself as a Newbery winner. It's such a very establishment kind of award, in the right kind of way, with the world of librarians pointing at the book saying, `This is worthy of the ages.' And I'm so very used to working in, and enjoying working in, essentially the gutter."

Also Monday, the Randolph Caldecott Medal, given to the illustrator of the best picture book, went to Beth Krommes for "The House in the Night," written by Susan Marie Swanson. The Coretta Scott King Award for best author was given to Kadir Nelson, for "We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball." The illustrator award went to Floyd Cooper for "The Blacker the Berry." The King prizes were founded 40 years ago to honor the works of black Americans.

The Newbery and other awards were announced by the American Library Association, currently meeting in Denver.

Other winners included Melina Marchetta's "Jellicoe Road," given the Michael L. Printz Award for young adult literature, and two Pura Belpre awards for Latino writing—best author to Margarita Engle's "The Surrender Tree" and best illustrator to Yuyi Morales for "Just in Case."

Gaiman, known for his "Sandman" comic-book series, had worked on the "Graveyard Book" off and on for more than 20 years, an understandable delay for the author of more than 20 books and the winner of prizes for science fiction, fantasy and horror.

Newbery winners have included such favorites as Louis Sachar's "Holes" and Kate DiCamillo's "The Tale of Despereaux." But medal judges have also been criticized for picking books either too difficult (last year's "Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices From a Medieval Village," by Laura Amy Schlitz) or too disturbing (Susan Patron's "The Higher Power of Lucky").

"School librarians say they simply don't have enough money to spend on books that kids won't find interesting—and in their opinion, that category includes most of this century's Newbery winners," the School Library Journal reported last fall. "Book aficionados frequently used the words `odd,' `unusual' or `unconventional' to describe the latest Newbery winners."

AP

In this undated photo released by HarperCollins, Neil Gaiman, author of "The Graveyard Book," is shown.

Gaiman is a beloved writer for adults and children, but "The Graveyard Book" isn't the coziest read, at least at the beginning, with its image of a knife so sharp that "if it sliced you, you might not even know you had been cut, not immediately."

He says "The Graveyard Book" was inspired in part by "The Jungle Book," Rudyard Kipling's classic about a boy raised by animals. Gaiman's book opens with a baby boy escaping an assassin who kills his parents and older sister. The boy totters to a decrepit cemetery, where he's adopted by ghosts, christened Nobody Owens (Bod for short) and given the Freedom of the Graveyard.

On Gaiman's blog, he writes that "The Graveyard Book" is not a children's book. It's "a book for pretty much for all ages, although I'm not sure how far down that actually starts. I think I would have loved it when I was eight, but I don't think that all eight-year olds were like me."

On Monday, Gaiman said he has been following the debate about the Newbery, never imagining he would become part of it. Beloved by readers and book-sellers, he is certainly far more popular than the past few Newbery winners, and he doesn't think his novel, beyond a little death and darkness, is upsetting.

"Apart from the first few pages, it doesn't exist to frighten people or trouble people," he said. "I've written my share of disturbing stuff, but this book is really a way of trying to think about the process of growing up, and, of course, the fundamentally joyous tragedy of being a parent, that if you do your job properly, your kids will grow up and leave you."

Gaiman, 48, has three children. Two have grown and moved away.

Work of being Miss America lured winner to crown

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Katie Stam always dreamed of becoming Miss America, but she bypassed the kiddie pageants and waited until she was more mature and sure of herself. Her view of Miss America changed in that time too, and made her want her new title even more.

A day after Stam was crowned Miss America 2009, she told The Associated Press that as a little girl, she considered Miss America more of a figure than a full-fledged job.

"I literally saw this girl who's living out her wildest dream," Stam said, but that view changed as she aged. "As soon as I found out the job description of Miss America, it only attracted me further."

The platform for the 22-year-old University of Indianapolis student is community service, and she says she's eager to start in that role. She planned to fly to New York later Sunday for a series of media interviews about her win.

"It starts right away," Stam said. "Miss America—being the goodwill ambassador for the Children's Miracle Network—that job, that position was laid in my hands the moment they put the crown on my head."

Reigning Miss Americas become spokeswomen for various causes and charities, including the Children's Miracle Network, a partner to the pageant.

Of those responsibilities, Stam said, "I can't wait to get started."

Stam overcame 51 other contestants, a throat infection and laryngitis Saturday night to win the crown.

AP

Miss Indiana Katie Stam is crowned Miss America 2009 by Kirsten Haglund, background, in Las Vegas on Saturday, Jan. 24, 2009.

She's the first winner from Indiana in the 88-year pageant.

"My state deserves it," said Stam, whose hometown is Seymour.

She said she wasn't a lifelong pageant contestant, entering her first at age 15.

"I wanted to make sure that I knew who I was and knew what I had to offer, so I was a freshman in high school," Stam said. "I didn't do any of the kiddie pageants because, like I said, I wanted to wait."

Stam rose to the top of the field after strutting in a black bikini and an off-the-shoulder, white lace evening gown, then singing "Via Dolorosa" and denouncing the use of performance-enhancing drugs among professional athletes. Along with the title, Stam won a $50,000 scholarship.

First runner-up Miss Georgia Chasity Hardman took home a $25,000 scholarship.

Stam said she still hopes to pursue another childhood dream—becoming a television news anchor—after her one-year reign as Miss America ends. She was one semester away from finishing her bachelor's degree in communications, but didn't know exactly when she would graduate because of her new duties, she said.

"Who knows what kind of opportunities will be ahead of me after my year as Miss America, but I can't wait," Stam said. "It's a dream and a goal of mine that I've had for a long time, and I can't wait to pursue that."

Oscar 3453 is 'born' in Chicago factory

AP

Bertha Fuentes assembles the statue and the base of Oscar #3453 at R.S. Owens & Company Monday, Jan. 26, 2009, in Chicago.

CHICAGO (AP)—One of the biggest stars of this year's Academy Awards was born on Chicago's northwest side, brought into the world by Martin Vega and prepped for his big close-up by Eladio Gonzalez.

Technically, his name is 3453, but he also goes by Oscar.

In a few weeks, he'll be glistening onstage at the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood, clutched perhaps by a tearful Kate Winslet or an even tearier Mickey Rourke. They will grab him around his waist, hoist him into the air and thank everyone who helped mold their success—everyone, that is, except Vega and Gonzalez.

Like most Hollywood sagas, the story of Oscar 3453 begins with casting—in this case, the transformation of a chunk of metal alloy into a 13 1/2-inch-tall man whose behind, as the story goes, was once described by Bette Davis as resembling her first husband's.

We're on location at the R.S. Owens factory, a nondescript building on North Lynch Avenue, where the statuettes have been made since 1983. It's Jan. 22, and coincidentally enough, this year's Academy Award nominations were just announced in Beverly Hills. "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" received a leading 13 nods, so who knows, maybe Oscar 3453 will end up with Brad Pitt or makeup artist Greg Cannom.

But right now, Vega, 40, focuses on his own artistry, as he melts bars made of britannia, a high-grade pewter alloy, in a casting tank. He then dips a ladle in the 780-degree liquid and slowly pours the molten liquid into a steel mold, one of just two ever made, the other now retired. The remaining mold is usually locked up in a safe, brought out only this time of year for the two or so days it takes to cast the 50 Oscars that will be shipped to Hollywood.

Vega tilts the mold slightly as he pours, so he fills the entire mold evenly.

That takes only 13 seconds, and it's just over a minute more before he unclamps the top of the mold, hammers it a bit until the top pops off, revealing to the proud Vega the backside of an 8 1/2-pound Oscar.

"Not bad for an 81-year-old man," says Owens sales manager and our escort for the day, Noreen Prohaska.

Vega takes out the still-hot statuette and lays it down next to seven others, which are all face up on a nearby table.

They cool for maybe an hour before some of the excess around the edges is cut off along with what resembles a piece of hose (think umbilical cord) protruding from the bottom where the molten alloy was poured into the mold.

From there it is taken to Gonzalez, 40, at the buffer machine. He smooths it with a sanding wheel about the size of a wheel on a kid's wagon, taking off what is called flash, a raised edge that runs along Oscar where the pieces of the mold fit together. He then replaces that wheel with a slightly larger buffing wheel.

Forty-five minutes later, Oscar shines.

Every statuette is assigned a serial number, which is engraved in its base, to ensure that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences can track each one, hence our subject's very special birth name, 3453.

Engraver Louise White, 56, secures the Oscar, face down, the top of its head against a piece of rubber "so we don't give him a headache," she says. The numbers 3-4-5-3 are lined up in a row on her engraving machine and White, a 36-year Owens veteran, uses what looks like a primitive dental drill to trace them.

That is connected to an industrial diamond stylus, which is pointed at the base of the Oscar and mimics the exact movements of the tracing instrument, only half as big. So, when she traces a '3' with one hand, the stylus is moving in the same way.

Now Oscar 3453 must be cured, which is factory-speak for waiting long enough to make sure there are no air holes or cracks that might weaken it. A few days later it was bath time, as Nunzio Giganti fitted Oscar on a wire rack before dipping him into soapy water to clean him up a bit. Then it was a dip in liquid copper, nickel and then ever so quickly, silver.

Giganti blow dries him, using an air hose that looks and sounds like one used for tires at a gas station. Finally, comes every trophy's dream—a dip in 24-karat gold in a tub used for Oscar and only Oscar.

Giganti then walks it over to the assembly area, where Bertha Fuentes screws on the brass-encased base, puts a plastic bag over Oscar's head and puts it into a form-fitted foam box, which is then put into a cardboard box for shipping

Early in February, Mr. 3453 will join his freshly-minted brothers on a journey taken by many a star-struck Midwesterner—a flight to Hollywood.

Meet the new teams on 'The Amazing Race'

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Most contestants on "The Amazing Race" must tackle language barriers during their trek around the world. As the reality series' first-ever deaf contestant, Luke Adams had double the trouble. The 22-year-old recent college grad and his mother Margie are among the 11 two-person teams racing for the $1 million prize in the upcoming 14th season.

"I thought it would be easy because my mother and I have always communicated really well," the longtime "Amazing Race" fan, who doesn't speak or read lips, said through an interpreter. "In the airports, my mom had to do all of the work because she had to do all of the talking. It was kind of hard for me to depend on her to do all of that."

"In the beginning, I think Luke didn't have a whole lot of trust that I was going to communicate all of the information that I was receiving to him properly," said Margie. "I would ask a question or for directions, and it would take five minutes to get the answer, then I'd give him a 30-second reply. He'd say, 'No, you didn't tell me everything.'"

Other teams this season include pairs of stuntmen, Southwest Airlines flight attendants, former National Football League cheerleaders and University of Louisville college athletes. Brother-and-sister team Victor Jih, 35, and Tammy Jih, 26, both graduated from Stanford University and Harvard Law School and now work as corporate litigators in California.

"Having seven years of higher education under our belts, we thought it would give us a big advantage because we're good at learning," said Tammy. "We went into this race knowing that everything we would face would be difficult and new and things that we're not familiar with, but we were really comfortable in the fact that we're good learners."

Beginning at the Los Alamitos Joint Forces Training Base near Long Beach, Calif., the Emmy-winning CBS reality competition (premiering Feb. 15 at 8 p.m. EST) will follow the teams for 12 episodes as they travel over 40,000 miles in 22 days to nine countries, including—for the first time—Romania as well as Switzerland, India and Russia.

"We shot in the city of Krasnoyarsk and the city of Novosibirsk," said "Amazing Race" executive producer Bertram van Munster. "The teams get from one city to another via the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Of course, it started off nice, but we got into this Siberian snowstorm with below-zero temperatures, which we weren't used to. It was pretty exciting."

At 68, Mel White is the season's oldest contestant. The gay-rights activist and former speechwriter for Pat Robertson and Billy Graham is teamed up with his 38-year-old son Mike White, the actor-screenwriter who penned such films as "School of Rock" and "Nacho Libre." Despite the frantic pace of the race, Mike insists he didn't bicker much with his dad.

AP

GOVERNORS BALL

Sherry Yard, executive pastry chef, left, and master chef Wolfgang Puck entertain reporters at a media preview of the food and decor of the Governors Ball, Monday, Jan. 26, 2009, in Los Angeles. The ball immediately follows the 81st Academy Awards presentation hosted by the Board of Governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Jury to visit Spector's home in 2nd murder trial

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The jury in Phil Spector's second murder trial will visit the music producer's home where actress Lana Clarkson died, but the judge set strict rules Monday on the presence of Spector's wife and the operation of an outdoor fountain.

Prosecutors complained that during his first jury's tour, Spector tried to change the volume of the fountain to suggest a chauffeur could not have heard him clearly when Spector allegedly said, "I think I killed somebody."

Deputy district attorneys Alan Jackson and Truc Do gave the judge e-mail exchanges they obtained between Spector and his first defense team in which a jury consultant suggested "the fountain be on full bore."

During the first jury's tour, the panelists asked to have the burbling fountain in the courtyard turned on and off so they could hear the ambient noise.

Spector

Superior Court Judge Larry Paul Fidler rejected prosecution objections to this jury's tour but agreed to consider having the fountain on if it is found that there is only an on-off switch and no way to manipulate the sound.

The judge also said Spector's young wife Rachelle can't be present in sight of the jurors. The tour was expected to take place next week.

Defense attorney Doron Weinberg wants to duplicate the scene at Spector's Alhambra home on Feb. 3, 2003, when Clarkson came there with Spector.

Spector, 68, the eccentric rock 'n' roll legend renowned for his "Wall of Sound" recording technique, is charged with second-degree murder in the death of Clarkson, 40, who became a 1980s cult figure following her starring role in the Roger Corman film "Barbarian Queen."

The new jury must decide the same question that ultimately stumped the first: Did Spector, a man known for threatening people with guns, shoot Clarkson, or did the actress, down on her luck and despondent about her future, turn a gun on herself?

The first jury heard five months of testimony and deadlocked 10-2 with the majority favoring conviction. The current trial has been under way for nine weeks.

George Clooney joins his dad to talk journalism

WASHINGTON (AP)—George Clooney traded jokes with his father, veteran journalist Nick Clooney, before a screening Monday night of the actor's 2005 film "Good Night and Good Luck."

The 47-year-old actor wrote and directed the film about legendary journalist Edward R. Murrow, which his father is now using to teach journalism students at American University. Both Clooneys appeared at a screening of the film for students, alumni and others at the Newseum, a museum about the news.

Nick Clooney said it's important to him that college students can learn from his son's work.

"I don't care for that," George snapped back.

"Never cared for this kid! His sister's great," the elder Clooney quipped.

"I always wanted to be adopted, couldn't find anyone," the son said, drawing laughs.

The younger Clooney said he grew up hearing about Murrow, and their family took pride in how journalists held the government accountable during the paranoia of the 1950s communist threat. Clooney said he wanted to make a movie to let people hear some "really well-written words about the fourth estate again."

Clooney, a vocal critic of the Iraq war, said he felt pressure to get the movie right because of criticism at the time that Hollywood actors were becoming too politically active.

"I realized if I was going to do a movie like this, I was going to have to get everything right," he said.

The Clooneys are from Kentucky, where Nick Clooney worked as a TV news anchor before moving to stations in Cincinnati, Salt Lake City. He also wrote a newspaper column in Los Angeles.

Actor George Clooney, right, joins his father veteran journalist Nick Clooney, for a screening and journalism panel at the Newseum in Washington, on Monday, Jan. 26, 2009.

AP

Digital transition delay would cost PBS $22M

NEW YORK (AP)—Delaying the upcoming digital TV transition for four months would cost public broadcasters $22 million, the PBS system chief estimated on Monday.

Paula Kerger, president and CEO of the Public Broadcasting System, said she hopes lawmakers keep that in mind as they consider legislation to delay the switch from Feb. 17 to June 12.

The stations will face increased power charges to maintain over-the-air broadcast signals, she said. Many have leases for signal transmitters that were due to expire on the date of the switch over and will have to make new arrangements, she said.

"This is such a tough situation for our stations because they have just gone through a process where they have raised the money to go through this transition," she said.

The Obama administration has sought the delay because the government program to provide coupons for converter boxes needs more money. The boxes are needed for people without cable or satellite TV to continue receiving TV signals after the conversion date. The latest estimate is that more than 6.5 million households are not prepared for the switch over.

The National Association of Broadcasters has not taken a position on extending the deadline. The TV stations don't want to suddenly alienate and lose viewers, but they've also sunk money into preparing for the Feb. 17 transition.

Kerger said that PBS is not supporting either side, but he doesn't want PBS' hardships lost among potential hardships faced by viewers.

"At the end of the day, our interest is public service and we want to make sure that people don't go without television," she said.

There's a possibility that TV networks would be allowed to choose whether to make the switch over on Feb. 17 or delay it, in which case Kerger said it's likely that PBS would allow its individual stations to choose for themselves.

ABC leads nominees for GLAAD Media Awards

LOS ANGELES (AP)—For the third year running, ABC leads nominees for awards from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. The network earned six nominations for the 20th annual GLAAD Media Awards, with "Brothers & Sisters," "Desperate Housewives" and "Ugly Betty" among its contenders.

The awards recognize fair and inclusive portrayals of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community and issues affecting them.

"How our lives are portrayed in the media doesn't make a bit of difference, it makes all the difference," said GLAAD president Neil G. Giuliano.

The organization announced its 185 nominees in 41 categories Tuesday.

CBS earned four nominations and NBC nabbed two. Nominees for feature film in wide release include "Brideshead Revisited," "Milk," "Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist," "RocknRolla" and "Vicky Cristina Barcelona."

"The nominees this year prove that the stories of LGBT Americans are interesting, compelling and will touch not only LGBT audiences, but broader audiences as well," Giuliano said.

Special prizes will be presented to Tyra Banks and Suze Orman. Banks will receive the Excellence in Media award, and Orman will receive the Vito Russo award.

ENTERTAINMENT TIDBITS

Michael Jackson's 'Thriller' planned for the stage

NEW YORK (AP)—"Thriller" a Broadway musical? Producer James L. Nederlander says he has acquired the rights for a stage version of Michael Jackson's iconic music-video spoof of horror films. The show will include songs from two of the pop king's best-selling albums, "Thriller" and "Off the Wall." "The Nederlanders and Michael Jackson represent live theater and musical excellence, so let the music begin," Tohme Tohme, a spokesman for Jackson, said Monday in a statement. "I love the idea of making 'Thriller' a musical. Girl meets boy, they fall in love, boy has big secret, now what?" said Nederlander, head of the company that owns nine Broadway theaters. No word yet on who will write the book for the show or what songs will be included in the production, or who will direct and choreograph.

Marvel sued for $750M in movie profits

NEW YORK (AP)—Shareholders of an ill-fated Stan Lee venture are seeking more than $750 million in profits from films based on Marvel comic characters such as "Spider-Man," "X-Men" and "Iron Man." The lawsuit was filed Monday in a Manhattan federal court on behalf of four shareholders of Stan Lee Media, Inc. Defendants include Lee, his wife, New York-based Marvel Entertainment, Inc., and former Marvel CEO Avi Arad. The lawsuit claims profits from Lee's comic creations belong to the company, which emerged from bankruptcy in 2006. The suit claims Lee and others ignored the company and shareholder's interests. Lee could not immediately be reached for comment. Marvel said through a spokesman that the lawsuit is filled with "ridiculous claims."

Gene Roddenberry, wife to spend eternity in space

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The creator of "Star Trek" and his wife will spend eternity together in space. Celestis Inc., a company that specializes in "memorial spaceflights," said Monday that it will ship the remains of Gene Roddenberry and Majel Barrett Roddenberry into space next year. The couple's cremated remains will be sealed into specially made capsules designed to withstand the rigors of space travel. A rocket-launched spacecraft will carry the capsules, along with digitized tributes from fans. The Roddenberrys' remains—and the spacecraft—will travel ever deeper into space and will not return to earth, company spokeswoman Susan Schonfeld said. After Gene Roddenberry died in 1991, his wife commissioned Celestis to launch a part of his remains into space in 1997. She died Dec. 18, 2008.

To thong, or not to thong: thousands enter debate

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

DEAR ABBY: I'm writing regarding the letter from "San Diego Sinner" (Nov. 21), whose mother says wearing thong underwear is sinful. Abby, that mother may not have known a better way to express her views. I believe she was trying to protect her daughters from males who might view the absence of a pantyline as a "signal" that they are sexually available.

The issue here isn't underwear; it's the girls' lack of trust in their mother. They should accept their mom's ruling as an indication of her love and concern for them. Her attitude may be quaint, but she loves them or she wouldn't be concerned.

MARY IN ALBUQUERQUE

DEAR MARY: You are a sweet lady, and while I'm sure the mother in question is trying to be conscientious, she may have overreacted. When I asked for reader input on this—"thongs up or thongs down"—I had no idea that thousands of people would take me up on it. My staff and I were buried!

Thongs are so commonplace today they are no longer considered to be a "moral barometer." They are worn by mothers, grandmothers, teachers—I even received a "thongs up" vote from an ordained minister. The following correspondence should be enlightening. Read on:

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I'm the daughter of a clergyman, deeply involved in my church. I dress conservatively and am as far from being promiscuous as it's possible to be and not be in a convent.

Most women wear thongs to avoid a pantyline. I suspect that the mother in that letter fears her daughters are trying to be sexy or are sexually active because they wear thongs. It's a mistake. It is possible for a girl who wears "granny panties" to still sleep around.

RELIGIOUS IN ST. LOUIS

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I vote thongs down. They strike me as being as "comfortable" and "sexy" as walking around with dental floss between one's teeth.

REALIST IN N.Y.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: Moral issues aside, thongs are not good for your health. Wearing thongs has caused an increase in the number of vaginal yeast infections and bacterial vaginosis infections in women. That teeny strip of fabric is a "bacteria highway" from back to front.

I work in a hospital, and you wouldn't believe how many parents bring elementary school-age daughters to our pediatric ER for urinary tract infections. The parents are repeatedly advised not to buy thong underwear for their girls. Add my vote to thongs down.

T.W. IN LAS VEGAS

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: When my oldest child was in kindergarten, his teacher approached me one day and handed me a Ziploc baggie. When I saw my nicely folded black silk thong inside, I nearly fainted.

I had done the laundry the night before, and my thong had velcroed to my son's jacket. He had raised his hand in class asking, "What is this?" My question: Would you rather your child's teacher find big "granny" undies or a thong? (Did I mention this was a Catholic school?)

RED-FACED IN RENO

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: When I was a new bride 30 years ago, my husband gave me money to buy a pair of "thongs." The only thongs I had ever heard of were those flat rubber sandals. Imagine his surprise when I got home and he asked me to "model" them. When I came out wearing fire engine red flip-flops, his expression was priceless. Imagine MY surprise when I realized what he'd meant by "thongs." I had seen those items displayed in the lingerie department and always assumed they were jock straps for transvestites.

THONGS ARE WRONG IN BUFFALO

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I vote thongs up. My manicurist's mother—a woman in her 80s—recently moved in with her. While doing her mother's laundry, she came across a thong. Shocked, she said, "Mom!" Her mother replied, "I'm not dead yet."

CAROL IN BURLINGTON, VT.

■ ■ ■ ■

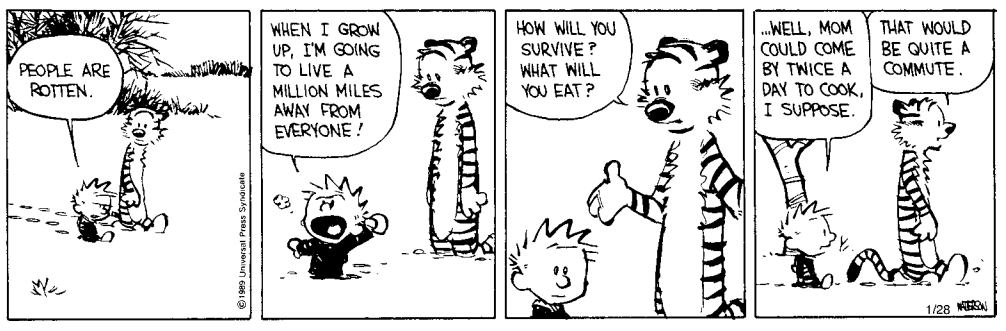
READERS: Tomorrow the results of my poll—and we'll hear what male readers said on this subject.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


PEOPLE ARE ROTTEN.
WHEN I GROW UP, I'M GOING TO LIVE A MILLION MILES AWAY FROM EVERYONE!
HOW WILL YOU SURVIVE? WHAT WILL YOU EAT?
...WELL, MOM COULD COME BY TWICE A DAY TO COOK, I SUPPOSE.
THAT WOULD BE QUITE A COMMUTE.
1/28
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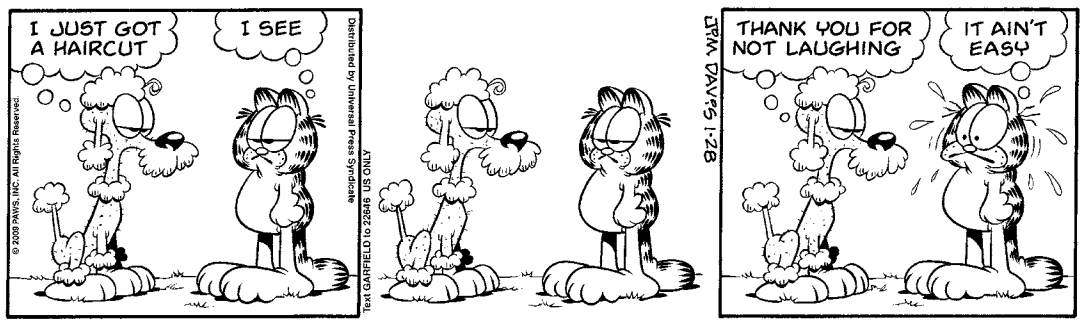
Garfield®

By Jim Davis


I JUST GOT A HAIRCUT
I SEE
THANK YOU FOR NOT LAUGHING
IT AIN'T EASY
JIM DAVIS 1-28
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Text GARFIELD to 22646 US ONLY

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

DAD, OK IF I THROW A SLEEPOVER HERE SATURDAY NIGHT?
JUST A SEC.
LAURA, OK IF I GO OUT WITH THE GUYS SATURDAY NIGHT?
GREAT.
FINE BY ME.
1/26
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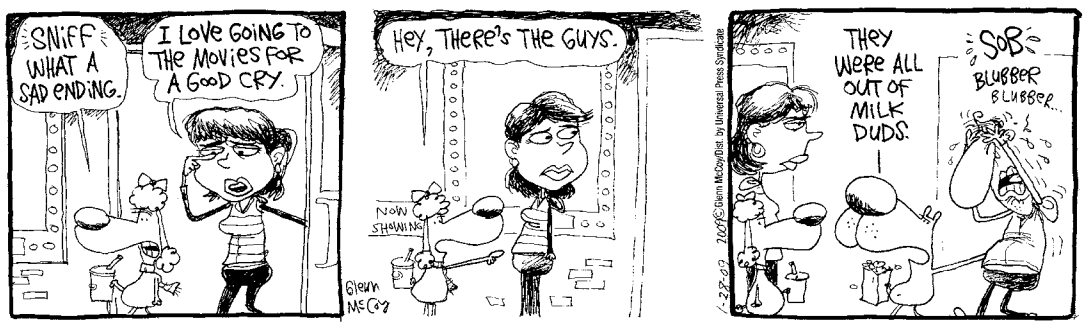
The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


SNIFF WHAT A SAD ENDING.
I LOVE GOING TO THE MOVIES FOR A GOOD CRY.
HEY, THERE'S THE GUYS.
NOW SHOWING
THEY WERE ALL OUT OF MILK DUDS.
SOB BLUBBER BLUBBER
Glenn McCoy
2009©Glenn McCoy/Dist. by Universal Press Syndicate
1-28-09

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Light-years away
5 Weep loudly
8 Vicinity
12 Theater box
13 Crony
14 Rent
15 Lamb and eggplant recipe
17 Libertine's feeling
18 — au poivre
19 Explosions
21 Pinocchio, notably
24 Braying beast
25 George Herman Ruth
28 Campus hangout
30 Recede
33 Mess up
34 Fastidious
35 Have a bug
36 Ostrich's kin
37 Right on the map?
38 Zealots' group
39 "Casablanca" pianist
41 Apiece
43 Rigatoni and rotini
46 5-Down features
50 Double Stuf cookie
51 Subject of Frederick I
54 Pottery oven
55 "— Town"
56 Notions holder
57 Relaxation
58 X rating?
59 Nitwit

DOWN
1 Charitable gifts
2 Yard portion
3 Chills and fever
4 Auction, essentially
5 Masseur's workplace, maybe
6 Furniture wood
7 Spill the beans
8 Holdup man?
9 Philosopher Jean-Jacques
10 Formerly, formerly
11 Picnic invaders
16 Schuss
20 Gentlewoman
22 Blue hue
23 Charlotte — (dessert)
25 Spelling contest
26 Branch
27 NATO headquarters site
29 "The Thin Man" dog
31 Puppeteer Baird
32 Sandwich shop order
34 Damage assessment org.
38 Pursued
40 Expiate (for)
42 Couric's network
43 Prod
44 Met melody
45 Location
47 One of the Jackson 5
48 Truckload
49 Fit of peevishness
52 Wish otherwise
53 Coffee dispenser

Solution time: 21 mins.

G	U	L	F	■	R	E	M	■	M	A	M	E
A	G	A	R	■	I	R	A	■	A	M	I	D
S	H	O	E	H	O	R	N	■	D	O	N	G
■	■	■	E	A	T	■	D	I	C	K	E	Y
P	S	A	L	M	■	N	A	S	A	■	■	■
E	A	S	Y	■	H	O	R	N	P	I	P	E
E	R	A	■	G	O	T	I	T	■	D	E	L
P	I	P	E	D	O	W	N	■	S	E	E	S
■	■	■	M	A	K	O	■	S	H	A	N	A
R	E	D	E	Y	E	■	S	U	E	■	■	■
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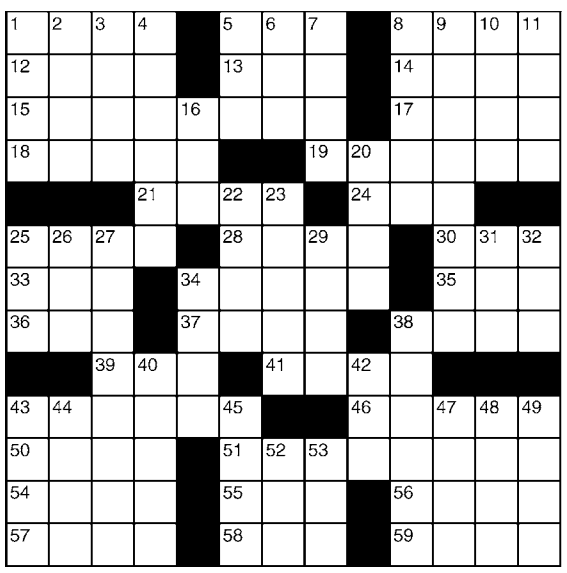
B	I	N	G	■	U	S	A	■	V	I	L	A
E	L	S	E	■	P	U	G	■	E	L	A	N

Yesterday's answer 1-28



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Chelsea Brummet, 22; Elijah Wood, 28; Nick Carter, 29; Sarah McLachlan, 41

Happy Birthday: Be passionate about everything you do and you will make your way through the challenges you face each day. Follow your own path, even if it's easier to go along for the ride. Someone from your past is likely to influence your decisions. Make sure everyone's intentions are good. Your numbers are 2, 9, 16, 23, 29, 37, 43

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Don't be fooled by what people say they want. Read between the lines to understand what will work for everyone influenced by your decisions. Secret talks will disclose surprising information and change the way you feel about someone. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Speak from the heart. You can make an impact on others but only if you are reasonable. Someone will try to entice you to do things on too large a scale when what you need to do is size down. Be genuine about your cause. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Deal with pressing issues that others have or you will lose ground and accomplish little. Pay off an old debt and you may be able to avoid emotional embarrassment. A change in pecking order is about to take place. ✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): A force play within a partnership may take you by surprise but, if you act fast, you will counteract any negative response. You can turn things around and position yourself as the good guy who wants to make things work. ✪✪✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Nothing will be simple if you keep wanting to turn everything into a big production. Keep things small and efficient. There will be changes within your peer group that will help you see your place and potential better. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): So much will depend on your interaction with others. You have to express your needs and desires if you want others to pitch in and help. A change at home will have an emotional impact on the way you do things from now on. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Don't be shut down by an aggressive partner or friend or relative who wants to have things his or her way. Stand your ground. Now is not the time to procrastinate when you should be making a satisfying move. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Don't spread yourself too thin. You have more to deal with than you realize so say no to extra demands before your own goals fall short. Focus on your creativity and you will sidestep manipulation. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Do what you must to keep the peace, your job and anything else that will help to stabilize your future. This is not the time to argue or damage relationships. Don't overspend or make promises you cannot keep. ✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Put things in order quickly and efficiently. Once you know where you stand financially, emotionally and personally, you can reassess your situation and determine what projects are possible. It's time to resolve issues so you can move forward. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): You have so many good ideas and opportunities to pursue but, if you try to do them all, you will spin your wheels with little progress. A false move now might cost you later on. Offer your services but not for free. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Take the initiative and do your best to help someone out whom you respect. Your good will and actions will bring you benefits when you least expect them but need them most. Don't be fooled by people talking big or bragging about the gains being made. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are ambitious, giving and sensitive. You have stamina and determination and will never do things in a small or insignificant fashion.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun,* ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations*

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	7	3	5	6	4			
	4		1			3		
9				7			6	
1				8			9	
6	8	2	3	9			7	
	9	4	2				5	
							3	
							4	
				4	8	5	2	9

Difficulty Level ★★★ 1/28

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

5	6	8	2	3	4	1	7	9
2	4	7	1	5	9	8	6	3
3	1	9	8	6	7	5	2	4
8	2	3	6	9	5	7	4	1
9	7	1	3	4	8	6	5	2
6	5	4	7	1	2	3	9	8
1	9	2	5	8	6	4	3	7
4	8	5	9	7	3	2	1	6
7	3	6	4	2	1	9	8	5

Difficulty Level ★★ 1/27

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

SAVETHEDELL.COM **Solution: 8 letters**

D	S	T	A	G	E	H	E	R	R	I	N	G	P	W
L	E	C	A	P	L	A	N	S	K	Y	S	R	E	I
A	E	L	H	N	B	N	E	G	O	R	T	I	P	L
T	B	S	I	M	A	(R)	T	S	A	P	A	E	P	E
K	M	O	S	C	A	T	(Y)	D	M	E	E	B	E	N
E	A	A	L	I	A	L	E	(E)	I	L	M	E	R	S
U	T	T	E	O	B	T	T	G	A	L	I	N	S	K
G	Z	E	Z	R	G	N	E	Z	M	Z	L	E	O	Y
N	O	K	T	T	C	N	C	S	I	H	K	S	Y	L
O	B	S	K	Z	R	O	A	G	S	H	H	L	I	A
T	A	I	E	A	R	A	G	A	S	E	K	O	D	I
R	L	R	C	N	T	Y	W	I	R	A	N	S	D	B
E	L	B	E	S	S	Z	K	H	S	O	U	P	I	E
Y	O	D	J	E	W	I	S	H	C	O	T	T	S	N
F	X	N	O	S	H	S	A	M	H	S	I	M	H	S

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Bens, Bialy, Bissel, Bologna, Brisket, Caplanskys, Carnegie, Corned, Cotts, Cream, Delicatessen, Dill, Griebenes, Herring, Jewish, Kasha, Katzs, Kishke, Kosher, Latke, Lox, Matzoball, Meat, Miami, Mishmash, Nate, Nosh, Pastrami, Peppers, Pitrogen, Rye, Schmaltz, Schwartz, Sols, Soup, Stage, Tongue, Treyf, Wash, Wilensky, Yiddish, Ziggys

Yesterday's Answer: Hallmark

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ZLOTY

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Find today's solution in this section

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Roddick advances after Djokovic quits in quarters

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Defending champion Novak Djokovic struggled in the heat Tuesday before retiring from his Australian Open quarterfinal against American Andy Roddick.

Roddick was leading 6-7 (3), 6-4, 6-2, 2-1 when the third-seeded Djokovic quit, maintaining Roddick's streak of semifinal appearances at Melbourne Park every alternate year since 2003.

Djokovic had just had his serve broken to go down 2-1 in the fourth set when he went to the side of the court and told umpire Carlos Ramos he could not continue.

He shook hands with Roddick and left Rod Laver Arena with the trainers.

The outside temperature with the roof open at Rod Laver Arena during the match was as high as 95.

He'd had a medical timeout after recovering a break to lead 2-1 in the third set and complained of heat-related problems.

Roddick, the 2003 U.S. Open champion, won the next five games to finish off the third set, winning the last 11 points.

Djokovic, who beat Roddick in the quarterfinals at last year's U.S. Open, finally held the opening game of the fourth set after nine minutes but was visibly slowing down and irritated.

"To be honest I didn't know (he was sick) until he called for help there. That's disappointing," Roddick said. "I feel bad for Novak right now.

"He worked so hard for this last year. To not get a fair chance to defend his title, that's too bad."

Djokovic beat Roger Federer in the 2008 semifinals and collected his first major title by beating France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in the final.

Andy Roddick of the United States returns to Serbia's Novak Djokovic in a Men's singles match at the Australian Open Tennis Championship in Melbourne, Australia, Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2009.

AP

That was the only title in the last 15 Grand Slams not won by either Federer or top-ranked Rafael Nadal.

Djokovic went out in the semifinals at the French and U.S. Opens and the second round at Wimbledon. He finished the year off by winning the season-ending Masters Cup.

The 21-year-old Serb has a history of retiring in big matches at majors. He failed to finish his quarterfinal against Nadal at the 2006 French Open and his semifinal against the Spaniard at Wimbledon in 2007.

Roddick will next play either No. 2 Roger Federer or No. 8 Juan Martin del Potro, who were to meet in a night match.

Federer is seeking a record-tying 14th Grand Slam singles title.

In the opening match in Rod Laver Arena, Vera Zvonareva ran off 11 straight games in a 6-3, 6-0 win over 2007 Wimbledon finalist Marion Bartoli of France to reach the semifinals for the first time in 25 majors.

The 24-year-old Russian's best performance in six previous trips to Melbourne was the fourth round—she'd gone out in the first round at the Australian Open three times, including last year. She also reached the quarterfinals at the 2003 French Open.

Seventh-seeded Zvonareva rallied from an opening service break to dominate Bartoli in the remainder of the match.

"I'm very excited about it," said Zvonareva, who cut her unforced errors from 15 in the first set to two in the second. "I think it was a great day for me."

She's had four 6-0 sets out of the 10 in her five straight-sets wins.

"I'm not really thinking about the scores or sets or any statistics," she said. "I'm just trying to concentrate on every match and trying my best. And I think I've been doing pretty good so far."

Bartoli, seeded 16th, had ousted top-ranked Jelena Jankovic in the fourth round.

"I think she played just unbelievably well," Bartoli said of the last 11 games. "She barely missed one ball after that. I was hitting as hard as I could. She was always coming back with some better shots."

Pettitte, Yankees agree at $5.5 million

NEW YORK (AP)—Andy Pettitte's only thought was to stay with the New York Yankees. He had no interest in returning to his hometown Houston Astros.

Still, the 36-year-old left-hander was bothered when the Yankees wanted to cut his salary from $16 million to $10 million.

"Heck, the bottom line is I'm a man, and I guess it does take a shot at your pride a little bit," he said. "But when you put all that aside, I wanted to play for the New York Yankees and, you know, that was the bottom line. I wanted to be there. I wanted to play in that new stadium."

After months of stalled negotiations, Pettitte and the Yankees agreed Monday to a $5.5 million, one-year contract. While the guaranteed money is less than half New York's original $10 million offer, he can make an additional $6.5 million in bonuses: $4.5 million based on innings and $2 million based on days on the active roster.

"If in fact Andy does in 2009 what he's done before, he'll actually make more money, so in that case we would have no regrets," said the pitcher's agent, Randy Hendricks. "If things would go wrong, we might be in position to say maybe we should have taken the left fork in the road instead of the right fork in the road. But that is, as Andy said, part of life and part of negotiations."

New York withdrew its first offer in December after agreeing to a $180 million, eight-year deal with first baseman Mark Teixeira, a contract that, combined with agreements for pitchers CC Sabathia and A.J. Burnett, raised the Yankees' spending spree to $423.5 million for three players.

Pettitte met in Texas with general manager Brian Cashman on Dec. 11 and told him he would be willing to accept performance bonuses. The sides kept on talking.

"It just got to the point where Randy called me and said, `I think this is it, buddy,'" Pettitte said. "It didn't take me long to decide because I knew that was where I was going to play."

Pettitte might have been able to get a multiyear deal from another club.

"I could have made an awful lot more money than what I signed for," he said.

He joins a starting rotation that already includes Sabathia, Burnett, Chien-Ming Wang and Joba Chamberlain. Phil Hughes, Ian Kennedy and Phil Coke are available in the event of injuries or if Chamberlain shifts back to the bullpen.

"He's going to be someone a lot of these guys on the block can lean on," Cashman said.

The deal raised the Yankees' projected opening-day payroll to $196.8 million for 17 players with agreements. That doesn't include reliever Brian Bruney, who is in arbitration and will make between $1.1 million and $1.55 million.

"It was a great offseason. We should have the best rotation in baseball and, hopefully, the bullpen will do as well as it did last year," Yankees co-chairman Hank Steinbrenner said. "We also have a terrific lineup."

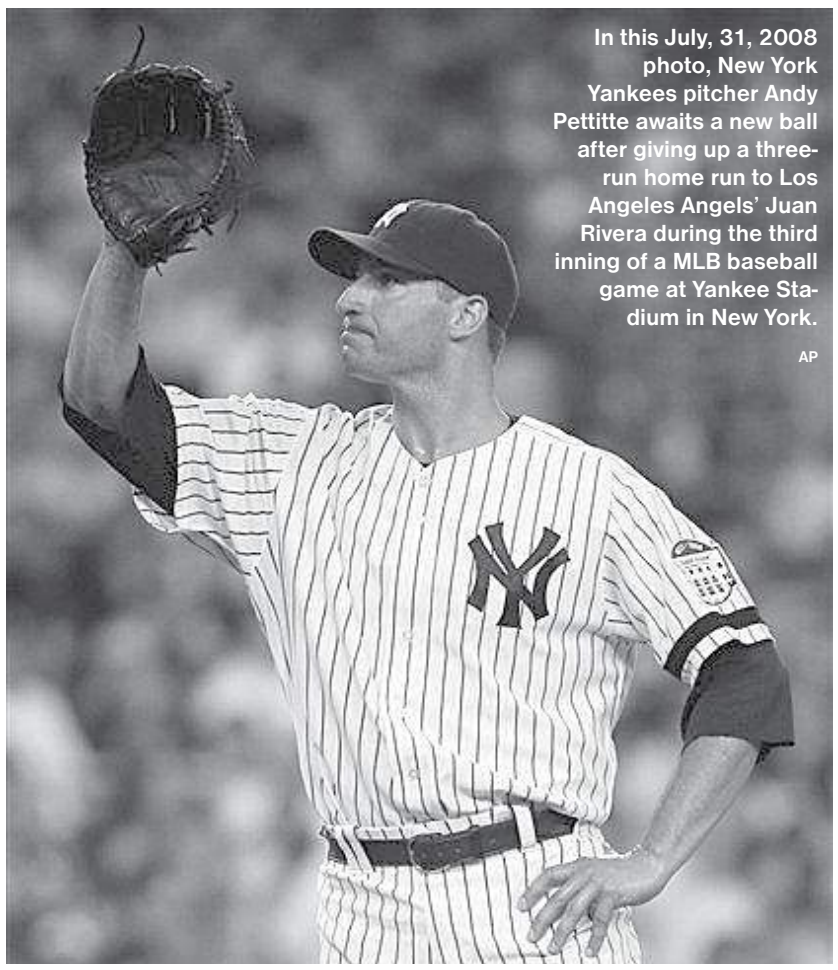
Steinbrenner ruled out any attempt to sign Manny Ramirez.

"We're out of it," he said.

Pettitte pitched for the Yankees from 1995-2003, helping them win four World Series titles, then spent three seasons with Houston. He returned to the Yankees in 2007 and was 14-14 with a 4.54 ERA last season, his highest ERA since 1999.

Pitching with a sore shoulder, he was 2-7 with a 6.23 ERA in his final 11 starts, beating Baltimore in the last game at old Yankee Stadium on Sept. 21.

Cashman doesn't anticipate any more significant moves for the Yankees during the offseason. He also doesn't think the increased spending creates more pressure on himself and manager Joe Girardi.



In this July, 31, 2008 photo, New York Yankees pitcher Andy Pettitte awaits a new ball after giving up a three-run home run to Los Angeles Angels' Juan Rivera during the third inning of a MLB baseball game at Yankee Stadium in New York.

AP

Cashman: Yankees should rally around A-Rod

NEW YORK (AP)—Brian Cashman thinks the Yankees should rally around Alex Rodriguez following a book in which former manager Joe Torre portrayed A-Rod as a divisive figure in the New York clubhouse.

"I think we've gone through so much of the Alex stuff that, you know, if anything, maybe this brings people closer together," Cashman said Monday during a conference call to announce Andy Pettitte was returning to the team in 2009.

In "The Yankee Years," scheduled for publication Feb. 3, Torre says "Alex monopolized all the attention" and that "he needs people to make a fuss over him."

"We never really had anybody who craved the attention. I think when Alex came over, he certainly changed the feel of the club," Torre said.

The book, by Torre and Sports Illustrated's Tom Verducci, details how some teammates referred to A-Rod as "A-Fraud" after he joined the team for the 2004 season.

"I have never one time heard of the term `A-Fraud' until I saw that rolling on the TV, I guess this morning or whenever they started reporting it," said Pettitte, who rejoined the Yankees for the 2007 season. "If it did go on, it went on before I was there."

New York hasn't been to the World Series since Rodriguez put on pinstripes.

"There's always going to be some controversy that surrounds this club," Cashman said. "The best way to try to deal with it is, I guess, rally around each other the best you can if there's real feelings there."

Cashman said that when Rodriguez became a free agent after the 2007 season, Mariano Rivera, Jorge Posada and Pettitte all urged him to re-sign A-Rod.

"That was real," Cashman said. "It was offered up."

Torre was hired before the 1996 season and led the Yankees to four World Series titles in his first five years. He left after the 2007 season, insulted he was offered a $5 million, one-year contract with performance bonuses rather than a multiyear deal.

Torre was critical of Cashman's inaction during the meeting in Tampa, Fla., when the manager pleaded his case before owner George Steinbrenner and team executives.

"Cash was sitting right over my shoulder and never uttered a sound the whole meeting," Torre said.

Cashman said Torre, now manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, telephoned him Sunday from Hawaii following reports on the book's contents.

"I'm comfortable with my relationship and how we interacted throughout the entire process," Cashman said, adding that Torre led him to believe "our relationship is strong."

Back-to-back Shaq leads Suns vs Wizards

WASHINGTON (AP)—Shaquille O'Neal had no problem with back-to-back games at the end of a road trip, scoring 29 points Monday night as the Phoenix Suns wrapped up a six-game East Coast swing with a 103-87 win over the Washington Wizards.

O'Neal went 10-for-14 from the field, 9-for-10 from the free throw line and had eight rebounds in 36 minutes for the Suns, who salvaged their trip by winning the last two games to finish 3-3. O'Neal had 19 points and 11 rebounds in 39 minutes in Sunday night's 104-99 victory over Atlanta.

Of course, as coach Terry Porter put it before the game, it helped O'Neal didn't have to do "all the banging he'd have to do if it was Yao Ming." With natural power forward Andray Blatche and rookie JaVale McGee manning the paint for the woeful Wizards, there was no need to give O'Neal the night off that he's been getting at times during back-to-backs this season.

Amare Stoudemire added 22 points and 15 rebounds, Leandro Barbosa scored 23 points, and Steve Nash had 14 points and 15 assists for the Suns, whose 53-38 rebounding advantage helped overcome their 17 turnovers.

Caron Butler scored 28 points, and Antawn Jamison had 27 for the Wizards, but they didn't get much help as Washington lost for the 10th time in 12 games. The rest of the team scored 32 points on 17-for-41 shooting.

Neither team had a double-digit lead until the fourth quarter, when O'Neal's layups against double teams accounted for the first and last baskets in a 12-4 run that gave the Suns an 89-79 lead with 5 minutes to play.

O'Neal literally threw his weight around in the game's final minutes. He pushed Blatche to the court along the baseline with 4:11 to play and was called for a foul, while Blatche lay on the floor with a left knee injury and had to leave the game. With 1:53 left, O'Neal threw down a defiant one-handed dunk that gave the Suns a 12-point lead.

Blatche said his knee "buckled and came back in place" and that X-rays were negative.

"It's real sore," Blatche said. "I thought it was something serious. It should be fine. All I know is he hit me, and I went flying."

Porter said before the game that his team would have to "fight the mentality of being on the plane already trying to get home," while Wizards coach Ed Tapscott was worried about the "first game home syndrome" after Washington's just-concluded West Coast trip.

As a result, neither team had the get-up-and-go to pull away in a first half that ended tied at 51. Jamison and Butler combined for 39 of Washington's points before the break, while Nash had an uncharacteristic four turnovers in the first two periods.

O'Neal's adventures included a technical foul for hanging on the rim after a first-half dunk, and a kiss on the head for Butler after tying up the Wizards forward on a drive to the basket. Butler smiled good-naturedly—then got the final laugh as he won the subsequent jump ball.

AP

Phoenix Suns center Shaquille O'Neal, right, kisses the head of Washington Wizards forward Caron Butler after O'Neal fouled him during the first half of an NBA basketball game Monday, Jan. 26, 2009, in Washington.

Heat 95, Hawks 79

At Miami, Dwyane Wade finished with 35 points and Miami held Atlanta without a field goal for nearly 13 1/2 minutes during one first-half stretch.

Atlanta set a franchise-futility record with its 27-point first half. Still, the Hawks got within seven points early in the final quarter before a quick 11-3 burst fueled by Wade and Mario Chalmers sealed it for Miami.

Daequan Cook scored 16 points and Chalmers added 12 points and six assists for Miami (24-19), which moved a season-best five games over .500. Udonis Haslem had a game-high 13 rebounds.

Knicks 104, Rockets 98

At New York, Wilson Chandler responded to being taken out of the starting lineup with 18 points to lead New York to its first win over Houston since 2004.

Chandler's 3-pointer with more than two minutes left gave the Knicks the lead for good at 97-96. The Knicks had lost eight straight to Houston.

Tracy McGrady led Houston with 20 points in his second game back from a left knee injury.

The Rockets were playing without center Yao Ming (sore right knee) for the second straight game.

Hornets 101, 76ers 86

At New Orleans, Chris Paul had 27 points, 15 assists, 10 rebounds and seven steals for his fifth triple-double of the season in New Orleans' win over Philadelphia.

Peja Stojakovic highlighted a 26-point performance with six 3-pointers for New Orleans, which was badly outscored inside but made up for it with 14 3s as a team.

Thaddeus Young had 22 points and Andre Miller 19 for the Sixers, who lost for only the second time in their past 10 games.

Timberwolves 90, Bucks 83

At Milwaukee, Al Jefferson had 23 points and 10 rebounds, and Ryan Gomes added 22 points to lift Minnesota over Milwaukee, which was playing without Michael Redd for the first time since he sustained a season-ending knee injury.

Randy Foye and rookie Kevin Love also each added 12 points for the Timberwolves.

Ramon Sessions had 18 points replacing Redd, Charlie Villanueva added 15 and Richard Jefferson 10 for Milwaukee.

Redd, averaging a team-high 21.2 points, tore the anterior cruciate ligament and medial collateral ligament in his left knee in Saturday's win against Sacramento when he landed on Ridnour's foot.

Thunder 94, Nets 85

At Oklahoma City, Kevin Durant scored nine of his 18 points in the third quarter, when Oklahoma City outscored New Jersey 31-14 on the way to a victory in front of just 5,000 fans.

Icy weather held the Ford Center well below the 18,000-plus who had attended the first 23 home games.

Russell Westbrook had 13 points and eight rebounds, and Jeff Green scored 13 for the Thunder, which led by as many as 30 in the fourth quarter before New Jersey's reserves rallied to close the gap.

Brook Lopez scored 18 for the Nets. Vince Carter, averaging 21.6 points per game, had just 8 on 2-of-12 shooting. Devin Harris (21.8) scored 10 and was 4-of-17.

Trail Blazers 113, Clippers 88

At Los Angeles, Brandon Roy scored 33 points on 11-of-15 shooting to lead Portland over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Travis Outlaw scored 16 of his 20 points in the fourth quarter and keyed the run that gave the Trail Blazers breathing room. Greg Oden went 7-of-7 from the floor and 2-of-4 from the line for 16 points and had six rebounds.

Al Thornton scored 23 for Los Angeles, which lost for the 16th time in 18 games.

Super arrivals: Cardinals and Steelers in Tampa

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—The pilot of their airplane stuck a team flag out the cockpit window as the Arizona Cardinals landed in a place few could have imagined.

Ever.

A team whose fans haven't touched ground since the start of a stunning postseason run in early January, arrived in the Super Bowl city Monday. With many players videotaping the proceedings—the walk across the tarmac, the bus ride to the team hotel, the first onslaught of media—it was clear that just being here meant something to a franchise long considered an NFL doormat.

"It's a great moment," said safety Adrian Wilson, the longest-tenured Cardinal. "To be here, to go through all the teams, to go through all the players, it's big for the whole organization. It's big for the players who are here right now.

"You never know the type of team you have and you never know the circumstances. This team and this group of guys who you have right now, I think we are special."

Not that the Steelers, seeking an unprecedented sixth Super Bowl title, don't have a special feeling about their surroundings. Even though a huge chunk of them have been this route before, the cameras were out, the smiles were wide, and the warm sun was welcoming.

"Are you kidding?" said wide receiver Hines Ward, the MVP of the Steelers' 2006 Super Bowl win over Seattle. "It's very nice to be in Tampa; it was snowing on our way here. They had to defrost the plane there was so much snow on the ground.

"It's the Super Bowl and it's a great event to take part in and, personally, I love the South, everything about being down in the South," said Ward, who grew up in Georgia. "Being in Florida, the weather is something. It definitely beats being back in Pittsburgh."

Ward and his teammates fully expect Tampa to resemble the Steel City by the weekend. No, not weatherwise; if that happens, rest assured the NFL won't be bringing its extravaganza back here. But in color, as in black and gold.

Quarterback Ben Roethlisberger envisions a tsunami of Terrible Towels.

"It's awesome," he said. "Every time we go to an away-city, in a way it feels like a home game because there are so many fans. We expect them to be out there and having fun."

For now, with no practice sessions until Wednesday, the players actually can have some fun, too. Not too much, of course.

Neither coach is about to clamp down on his players this early in the week. They promise to keep things reasonable and as normal as possible, so don't look for any early curfews like the ones Dick Vermeil imposed on his 1980 Eagles. Philly's players got tighter as the week wore on, even as the Oakland Raiders were partying across New Orleans.

By game time, the Eagles could barely breathe, let along play football, and they were routed by the loose Raiders.

"He hasn't put any handcuffs on us," James Harrison, the defensive player of the year, said, referring to coach Mike Tomlin. "We have the same freedoms as if we were staying in Pittsburgh for a week, as opposed to here."

Same thing for the Cardinals, whose coach, Ken Whisenhunt, was Pittsburgh's offensive coordinator for that fifth Super Bowl win. Whisenhunt understands the importance of sticking to the norms, even if this is more than uncharted territory for the Cardinals.

He also believes the week the Cardinals spent in the East in September, with back-to-back games in Washington and the Meadowlands, will be beneficial now. Even if Arizona lost both games.

"This is a week of distractions," he said, "and this is one distraction that is not new to us. It helps us minimize that distraction."

Regardless, both coaches, as well as veterans who have gotten this far—yes, the Cardinals have some players who made Super Bowl teams elsewhere, including quarterback Kurt Warner—can't stress enough the importance of not stressing too much.

"I'm just going to have fun and enjoy it," Roethlisberger said. "I don't know if it's my last one, you never know. I hope not. I hope I can come back to five more of these, but you just never know."

Villagomez takes SSC helm

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

NMASA Hall of Fame inductee Mike Villagomez is now solely calling the shots for Saipan Swim Club, making him the first home-grown coach at the helm of SSC.

Villagomez became SSC's head coach following Michael Blasberg's resignation last month. Before Blasberg called it quits, he and Villagomez were co-coaching SSC after former mentor Michael Stewart left the island in July last year.

"It was a sort of dream come true. I have always wanted to be a coach after I stopped joining competitive swimming," said Villagomez, who was one of CNMI's top swimmer in the 1980s competing in off-island and regional tournaments.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
SSC head coach Mike Villagomez, left, poses with SSC board officials Lisa Kimball, center, and Sam Martinsen after the club's training sessions at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool in Marpi last week.

Villagomez said he knew that Blasberg's stint with SSC was only temporary.

Blasberg in an email to *Saipan Tribune* said when he took over from coach Stewart, it was pretty clear that this was a fulltime job and that he wouldn't be able to deliver the level of coaching Stewart did given his inexperience.

"I let the board know that I wanted to help out and would be a temporary custodian until a more permanent replacement could be found. Mike and Kristina (assistant coach Kristina Springer) will do a great job, they're both P.E. teachers and have extensive swimming experience," Blasberg said.

Villagomez is with Cha-Cha Oceaniaview Junior High School and he said being a teacher will help him deal with SSC swimmers.

"As a teacher, you are dealing with students who have different attitudes and you learn how to be patient with them. The same goes with teaching these kids to swim. They skill levels are different, so you have to be patient and understanding during training sessions," Villagomez said.

"It will be a great challenge serving as SSC coach, especially this year. We have a lot of new swimmers so 2009 will be a rebuilding year for us," he said.

Lisa Kimball of the SSC board said they expected to have between 45 to 50 swimmers consistently attending their training sessions at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool in Marpi this year.

"But the number goes down in the first few months of the month because of the cold weather before many returns to practice when summer approaches," said Kimball, who added they had 15 visiting Korean students training with SSC swimmers last summer.

Kimball and the rest of SSC board, headed by vice president Sam Martinsen, said they are relieved that the club now has a head coach on a full time basis.

"We can now concentrate on the operations of SSC and the board and Mike will be focusing on teaching the kids and preparing them for future tournaments," Martinsen said.

Villagomez said first up for SSC is the virtual heptathlon meet next month and then the SSC International Invitational, also in February.

EX-BRAVES

From Page 28

with his former teammates in Atlanta, foremost among them were future Hall of Famers Chipper Jones and Greg Maddox.

"Greg was my best friend. He was older than me. He's like a father to me. I learned a lot from this guy. I give him one question and he gives me back 10 answers," Bong said.

Bong said that when Maddox retired, he felt very sad because he considered him as the best pitcher ever in the Major League.

LG Twins acquired his services for the 2006 season of the Korean pro league.

The Twins are hoping to end a 14-year title drought since winning their second championship in 1994.

LG Twins are banking on Bong, along with his teammate Jin Young Lee in the national team that took the baseball gold from the United States in Beijing.

Asked to share about that experience in China, Bong said that game was the most exciting he ever played not only because he was the starting pitcher but also the way Korea won it.

"I gave up two runs in the game. We won in the extra inning," he recalled.

The game was tied after nine full innings but the Korean national team, which was composed of all-star pros, prevailed with the slimmest of margins, 6-5, over the Americans, who were composed of minor league players.

"The U.S. committed one mistake in the extra inning. That was the chance we had," he said.

Every now and then, Bong remembers the thrill of winning that ultimate Olympic gold via the hard way.

"My family is also part of that honor. Gold is forever. Even when I die, it is still there. Whenever I see my medal I cry," Bong said.

For the young athletes here on Saipan, Bong said dreaming is very important part of an athlete's life.

"Saipan is so small but I think young kids like baseball. They should continue to dream to make it to the Major League. I think that everyone has a chance. They must never give up. Just keep on trying and train hard everyday. Let yourself sweat and I'm sure your dreams will come true," Bong advised.

Bong said he likes coming back here to Saipan not only because of the good weather but every time he goes, he can see the beautiful smile of the people.

"They seem to be happy always," he said.

FIBA

From Page 28

good result will be achieved in June," Smith said.

The Ada Gym and the Marianas High School Gymnasium will be hosting games and practice sessions for the Oceania caging, but only the latter made the grade when FIBA Oceania inspected the facilities in October last year.

The MHS Gym will require only minor repairs, while the Ada Gym will need a major facelift to meet the standard for hosting such top-caliber tournament.

The CNMI's hosting rights on the Oceania caging was put in danger after the Ada Gym received a failing grade during the inspection.

Smith in an earlier e-mail said that if BANMI does not come up with a program to address the problems on the facilities, chances are either Palau or Samoa will be named new host of the quadrennial event. Palau and Samoa were the two other FIBA Oceania members that made bids for hosting the Oceania tournament.

The Oceania caging will feature the powerhouse teams of New Zealand and Australia and it will be the biggest basketball tournament CNMI will be hosting. Guam and the CNMI are automatically given slots to the tournament, which will have both the men's and women's competitions, leaving only four slots to be contested by the 19 other members of FIBA Oceania.

Rangamar, in a separate interview with *Saipan Tribune*, said the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs assured BANMI that necessary support is available for the renovation of the Ada Gym.

"We are just waiting for an assurance letter from the governor and hopefully before the week ends we will get it and sent it to FIBA Oceania so we can start moving for this project," Rangamar said.

The BANMI president added the cost for the major renovation is estimated at $36,000.

FIBA Oceania in its evaluation report on the Ada Gym noted the following equipment/areas that needed major repairs: Backboard, shot clock, scoreboard, bench, court, change room, ventilation, lighting, and rest room.

While BANMI is busy securing support for the tournament from both the public and private sectors, FIBA Oceania is also doing its job to assist the host federation in getting equipment for the Ada gym.

"FIBA Oceania on behalf of BANMI is negotiating with the FIBA Study Centre and the Study Centre Partners to supply upgrade backboards and shot clocks for the Ada Gym. These negotiations are in the advanced stage with a high probability of success," Smith said.

HEO

From Page 28

made it to the main draw of the men's open singles division of the Canterbury tournament.

In the main draw, the 15-year-old Heo got a bye in the first round before being paired against Sean Berman in the Round of 16. Berman won, 6-2, 6-3, sending Heo to the consolation draw.

In the consolation draw, Heo met Espie anew, and this time the Auckland bet prevailed, 6-4, 6-2.

The top-seeded Dan King-Turner won the tournament after beating the second-ranked Ged Jones in the finals, 7-5, 6-3.

Heo was only the third player from the Pacific Oceania Touring Team to play in Canterbury tournament this year. The two others were William O'Connell lof Fiji and Papua New Guinea's Marcia Tere-Apisah

Tere-Apisah also won her first match in the women's singles qualifier, before losing her second game and first match in the main draw.

O'Connell was entered in the qualifying round and failed to make the main draw when he bowed to Michael Saunders in the first round, 2-6, 1-6.

It was Heo's second tour of duty for the Pacific Oceania squad, but it was his first time to compete in New Zealand, as last season the trip was only for three tournaments in Australia.

Beside the tournament in Canterbury, Heo and his teammates are also set to compete in Wellington and Auckland.

Heo hopes to get Junior ITF ranking points from the three tournaments in New Zealand. The lone NMI player to receive ITF Junior ranking is currently at No. 1,226 in the world.

The CNMI bet left Saipan for tournaments in Australia and New Zealand in the first week of January and will not be back until Feb. 16. He is set to leave New Zealand on Feb. 14 after the Wellington International Junior Championships.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	37	9	.804	_
Philadelphia	21	22	.488	14 1 / 2
New Jersey	20	25	.444	16 1 / 2
New York	19	25	.432	17
Toronto	18	28	.391	19

Southeast Division

Orlando	33	10	.767	_
Atlanta	26	18	.591	7 1 / 2
Miami	24	19	.558	9
Charlotte	18	26	.409	15 1 / 2
Washington	9	35	.205	24 1/2

Central Division

Cleveland	34	8	.810	_
Detroit	24	19	.558	10 1 / 2
Milwaukee	22	26	.458	15
Chicago	18	27	.400	17 1 / 2
Indiana	17	27	.386	18

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	29	14	.674	_
New Orleans	27	14	.659	1
Houston	28	18	.609	2 1 / 2
Dallas	25	19	.568	4 1 / 2
Memphis	11	32	.256	18

Northwest Division

Denver	29	15	.659	_
Portland	27	17	.614	2
Utah	25	20	.556	4 1 / 2
Minnesota	16	27	.372	12 1 / 2
Oklahoma City	10	35	.222	19 1 / 2

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	35	8	.814	_
Phoenix	25	18	.581	10
Golden State	14	31	.311	22
L.A. Clippers	10	34	.227	25 1 / 2
Sacramento	10	35	.222	26

Yesterday's Games

Phoenix 103, Washington 87
Miami 95, Atlanta 79
New York 104, Houston 98
Minnesota 90, Milwaukee 83
Oklahoma City 94, New Jersey 85
New Orleans 101, Philadelphia 86
Portland 113, L.A. Clippers 88

NBA LEADERS

Scoring

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Wade, Mia.	42	432	308	1206	28.7
James, Clev.	42	417	289	1177	28.0
Bryant, LAL	43	408	260	1132	26.3
Granger, Ind.	41	352	260	1072	26.1
Nowitzki, Dall.	43	403	265	1110	25.8
Durant, OKC.	43	376	252	1061	24.7
Bosh, Tor.	46	370	323	1072	23.3
Jefferson, Minn.	42	397	156	950	22.6
Roy, Port.	39	304	226	869	22.3
Harris, N.J.	38	256	285	829	21.8
Carter, N.J.	44	329	216	952	21.6
Johnson, Atl.	43	343	154	927	21.6
Paul, N.O.	40	289	242	848	21.2
Stoudemire, Phoe.	42	316	251	886	21.1
Jamison, Wash.	43	343	157	896	20.8
Duncan, S.A.	43	344	193	881	20.5
J. Terry, Dall.	44	336	124	891	20.3
Crawford, G.S.	39	271	162	787	20.2
West, N.O.	37	279	178	741	20.0
Gordon, Chi.	45	314	174	901	20.0
Howard, Orl.	41	283	253	819	20.0
Butler, Wash.	40	286	186	798	20.0

FG Percentage

	FG	FGA	Pct
Nene, Den.	244	398	.613
O'Neal, Phoe.	233	392	.594
Okafor, Char.	244	419	.582
Bogut, Mil.	173	301	.575
Lee, N.Y.	273	478	.571
Howard, Orl.	283	501	.565
Millsap, Utah	242	429	.564
Biedrins, G.S.	242	432	.560
Gasol, LAL	278	498	.558
Bynum, LAL	232	423	.548

Rebounds

	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVE
Howard, Orl.	41	179	392	571	13.9
Camby, LAC	35	123	360	483	13.8
Biedrins, G.S.	44	178	354	532	12.1
Murphy, Ind.	39	71	377	448	11.5
Lee, N.Y.	43	136	357	493	11.5
Okafor, Char.	44	168	307	475	10.8
Jefferson, Minn.	42	139	307	446	10.6
Duncan, S.A.	43	114	329	443	10.3
Bosh, Tor.	46	126	324	450	9.8
Millsap, Utah	39	156	222	378	9.7

Assists

	G	TOT	AVE
Paul, N.O.	40	441	11.0
Williams, Utah	32	324	10.1
Nash, Phoe.	38	351	9.2
Calderon, Tor.	34	291	8.6
Kidd, Dall.	44	360	8.2
B. Davis, LAC	30	241	8.0
Rondo, Bos.	46	368	8.0
Duhon, N.Y.	43	339	7.9
Wade, Mia.	42	305	7.3
James, Clev.	42	289	6.9

By The Associated Press

LOCAL SCORES

BUDWEISER SOFTBALL STANDINGS

Men's Division

DCCA	11	0
CPA	9	1
Freedom Air	8	1
No Zone	8	2
Legislature	8	4
Joeten Motors	7	3
Beach Boys	7	3
Docomo	6	4
P & S	5	4
POI	5	5
DLNR	5	5
DEQ/CRM	5	5
Law & Order	3	7
CUC	3	7
CHC	3	7
PSS	3	8
PIC	2	7
Customs	2	8
Mayors	1	10
Hopwood	0	10

Women's Division

NMC	8	1
DCCA	4	4
Finance	3	4
CUC	3	4
CHC	1	6

NAVY HILL BASKETBALL STANDINGS

RBC Rollers	4	0
Docomo	3	0
Dollar Days	3	0
MBI	3	2
Athlete's Foot	2	2
Uncle Ben	2	1
MIGS	1	1
Inscape	1	3
IT& E	1	3
San Antonio Shooters	0	2
670 Rollers	0	2
Mobil	0	4

Record field in Winter Festival of Runs

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

This year's Winter Festival of Runs was the biggest since the inception of the event in 2006, attracting 533 participants.

The 2009 turnout also more than doubled the number of runners in 2008—233—making the organizing Marianas Visitors Authority pleased with the success of the fourth edition of the annual event.

"Our target this year was 500 from 233 in 2008, upping the numbers by 300 so we are very pleased with the turn out," MVA PR/CP manager Martin Duenas said.

The festival, which featured a full marathon, half marathon, and 10K races, had a participant as young as 10 years old and as old as 88 years old.

Ayari Yamamoto and Gaesyu Hahn were the youngest runners in the festival and competed in the 10K race. The oldest was Yoshio Deijima, who also raced in the 10K run.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Yoshio Deijima, an 88-year-old participant in the 2009 Winter Festival of Runs, talks to KSPN Channel 2 News' Bob Coldeen through interpreter Aya Matsumoto.

Majority of the participants came from Japan and with 300 more runners joining the festival, MVA had to look for more volunteers for assistance before, during, and after the races.

"Meeting our 500 pax goal meant a lot of marketing efforts from our partners in Japan where about 80 percent of our participants came from. The only minor challenge we had locally was having to adjust all logistical coordination to accommodate the 300 increase in participants," Duenas said.

Duenas added many participants in the 2009 races had already made commitments to return next year, boosting MVA's target of increasing the number by 100 percent in 2010.

"Many participants said they will return next year. They love the event and the course setup. We offer them a good experience. From the scenic course to friendly volunteers and helpful police officers. We offer the 'Hafadai Tirow' spirit, which means our island's unique hospitality," Duenas said.

This year's Winter Festival of Runs top winners include Saipan's Mamiko Oshima-Berger and Izuru Nakashima (full marathon), Mieko Carey and Masami Iwamoto (half marathon), and Noriko Jim and Matthew Mancao (10K).

The 2008 edition of the annual event was supported by Northwest Airlines, Oakley, MVA, Northern Marianas Athletics, and DFS Galleria Saipan. Other sponsors were Department of Public Safety, Hawaiian Rock, American Memorial Park, Division of Parks and Recreation, Department of Public Works, and Commonwealth Health Center.

Beach Boys bounce back vs. POI

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

The Beach Boys won against POI, 16-10, last Monday night in the 2008-2009 Budweiser Inter-Government /Business Softball League at the Capital Hill Ballfield to bounce back from a loss in their previous game.

First baseman B.J. Sablan, catcher Stanly Aldan, and centerfielder J.R. Suel led the Beach Boys' offensive thrust as the team remained in seventh position with a 7-3 win-loss record.

The victory also made up their 5-13 defeat to defending champion and league-leading DCCA last week as the Beach Boys completely dominated POI, out-hitting them (22-13), as well as registering clear advantages in doubles (3-0), triples (1-0), homerun (1-0), and RBIs (16-10).

Sablan went 3-fo-3, including three RBIs, a triple, and reached home plate twice.

Suel hit three of four, including two doubles and an RBI and had three runs.

Aldan was also 3-for-3, had two runs, a double and three RBIs.

The Beach Boys easily translated the game into their favor after POI went to 3-2 lead after the first full innings.

As POI failed to sustain that early good start, Oliver Schermibal scored a solo homerun to tie the game at three-all while Sablan made it 4-3 for the Beach Boys on a single by Harlan Delos Reyes.

Jun Kaipat, Highness Asanuma, Tony Lizama, Mabel Ngirngemelas, and Marvin Manahane all scored for POI in the top of third, but the Beach Boys retaliated with five runs from Stanley Aldan, Steve Igisomar, Schermibal, Sablan, and Delos Reyes in the bottom of the same inning.

Max Kadisang, Ota Nobuyuli, Ota Nobuyuki, Suel, Mel Aldan, and Stanley Aldan then added five more runs for the Beach Boys to widen the gap, 14-8.

Kyle Kaipat and Ngirngemelas added two more runs for POI in the top of sixth, while Beach Boys reliever Kotaro Tsujimo scored his lone run on a double by Suel, who later earned his third run of the night on a single by Igisomar.

In the top of seventh, winning pitcher Igisomar made sure the first three batters did not reach first base, including the game's lone strikeout on third batter Highness Asanuma, which dealt POI its fifth setback in 10 assignments.

Legislature 15, PSS 8

In the other men's division game, Legislature overcame a slow start to beat Public School System, 15-8, and stayed in fifth place in the team standings.

Legislature is now 8-4, while PSS is 3-8.

PSS failed to capitalize on a 7-2 lead after the top of the second inning as Legislature exploded with seven runs in bottom second for a 9-7 advantage that they never relinquished.

Outfileder Ben Camacho came up with three runs and had two RBIs on one hit in three at bat.

Dennis Cabrera had three runs on two of four, including two doubles and an RBI.

Mitch Aaron failed to reach home plate but went 2-for-3 with three RBIs.

Paul Lizama also contributed well in offense with three hits on four at bat, including three doubles, one run and two RBIs, while Toi Celis had two runs in two hits, a double and an RBI and Rox Kani had one run in two hits and an RBI.

Chico Ilo went 3-for-4 with one run and one RBI.

Emery Fitial, Sim Iramk, and Nizer Misayos led PSS in offense with two runs each.

NMC *routs* DCCA *in women's softball*

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

Northern Marianas College routed defending champion Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, 20-2, Monday night in the women's division of the 2008-2009 Budweiser Inter-Government/Business Softball League at the Capital Hill Ballfield.

All NMC players who went to bat, were productive including three hits apiece from Cheryl Obichang, Kuki Pangelinan, and Connie Camacho, two each from Joyce Taro, Tracy Uchao, and Felisa Brel, and one each from Pauline Camacho, Angie Ngirmeduch, Eva Salas, Edwina Baulechong, and Diduch Tudela.

NMC was in control on offense with 26 hits with 20 RBIs against only five hits and one RBI for DCCA.

Pangelinan hit 3-for-4 at bat, including a double, two triples, and finished with five RBIs for NMC, while Baulechong was 4-of-4 with four RBIs.

Taro was 3-for-4 and had two runs and two RBIs; Obichang, two of three, one RBI and one base on ball, Ngirmeduuch, three of four, one run and two RBIs.; and Connie Camacho, three of four, three runs and an RBI.

Brel went 2-for-4, one run, three RBIs, and was struck out once but the winning pitcher was steady at the mound giving only five hits and only three players were able to step at second base.

After a 3-1 lead in the first full inning, NMC jumped to an 18-1 advantage by scoring 10 in the second and five more in the third.

Shortstop Bert Camacho and first basewoman Nadia Saralu scored the two runs for DCCA.

Bert Camacho, who was 2-for-2 in the night, tripled in the first in the bottom of the first inning before reaching the home plate on a sacrifice fly by catcher Janice Camacho.

Saralu scored her team's second and last run in the fourth on a single by leftfielder Doris Rangamar.

DCCA absorbed its fourth setback in eight games.

The next game in the women's division will be on Friday night.

Department of Finance will part ways with Commonwealth Utilities Corporation starting at 7:30pm.

The two teams are currently tied with 3-4 win-loss records.

Young guns fire up Uncle Ben, MBI

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

MBI and Uncle Ben leaned on their young players to thwart separate opponents in the 2008 Navy Hill Friendship Basketball League Monday night at the Garapan Basketball Court.

MBI drew crucial points from Jayvan Tarkong and Marvin Rabauliman in the fourth period to edge Athlete's Foot, 74-66, in the second game of the night. Tarkong and Rabauliman are members of the CNMI Junior National Team.

Meanwhile, their teammate on the Junior Nationals—Jericho Cruz—exploded for 34 points to lift Uncle Ben to a 73-66 triumph against Inscape in the first game

Uncle Ben entered the fourth period behind by three, 50-53, when Cruz teamed up with Badong Camacho, Mike Umali, and Boyet Carino in stealing the win from Inscape.

Cruz made seven markers in the fourth period, Camacho chipped in six, while Umali and Carino added four apiece.

Inscape was held to only four field goals in the fourth period to lose the lead and the game. It absorbed its third defeat in four games.

Uncle Ben improved to a 2-1 record.

In the second game, Tarkong and Rabauliman drilled six points apiece in the fourth period to give MBI its third victory in five games.

MBI led by only two points, 51-49, after the third period. In the fourth quarter, MBI's young guns outlasted the veterans of Athlete's Foot with Tarkong and Rabauliman canning important baskets.

Tarkong and Rabauliman combined for 27 points. Another youth player—Dan Mateo—helped MBI's cause adding 14 points. Ernie Moises top-scored for MBI with 16 markers, making four in the final canto.

Moises fired two triples in the first period, while Dan had one from downtown to lift MBI to an 18-13 lead.

Arreza came off the bench and scored eight points in the second period allowing Athlete's Foot to grab the upperhand, 34-33.

Moises and Dan regained their shooting touch in the third and combined for 15 of MBI's 20 points in that quarter to reclaim the lead, 51-49.

Tarkong and Rabauliman picked up where Moises and Dan left of in the fourth period to preserve the victory.

Arreza paced Athlete's Foot with 14 points, while Elmer Esdrelon contributed 13. Junar Guiab finished with 12, while Nate Mateo scored 10.

First Game

Uncle Ben 73 – Cruz 34, Camacho 12, Aquino 6, Carino 6, Lizama 4, Umali 4, Bungahus 3, Tumaquip 2, Than 2.

Inscape 67 – Peredo 17, Ranola 14, Mendoza 12, Mendiola 7, De Dios 6, Paje 4, Rebuyon 4, Olivos 2.

Scoring by quarters: 20-21, 29-28, 50-53, 73-66.

Second Game

MBI 74 – Moises 16, Rabauliman 15, Mateo 14, Tarkong 12, Barrios 9, Opone 5, Garcia 3.

Athlete's Foot 66 – Arreza 14, Esdrelon 13, Guiab 12, N. Mateo 10, Fernandez 6, Tamondong 4, A. Mateo 4, Ong 2, Joyner 1.

Scoring by quarters: 18-13, 33-34, 51-49, 74-66.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

MBI's Marvin Rabauliman, right, drives against Athlete's Foot's Jawn Joyner during their game in the Navy Hill caging Monday night at the Garapan Basketball Court.

Roddick advances after Djokovic quits in quarters

Defending champion Novak Djokovic struggled in the heat Tuesday before retiring from his Australian Open quarterfinal against American Andy Roddick. **24**

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Record field in Winter Festival of Runs

This year's Winter Festival of Runs was the biggest since the inception of the event in 2006, attracting 533 participants. **27**

Ex-Braves pitcher shares Olympic experience

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

An Olympic gold is every athlete's ultimate dream.

For Korea's ace pitcher Joong Keun Bong it was the greatest moment of his baseball career.

Bong, a former pitcher for the Major League's Atlanta Braves, was glad to share his thoughts about Korea's gold medal triumph in the Beijing Olympics last year as well as his heydays in the MLB, his experiences with other MLB greats, his hopes for his current Korean pro league team, and advice to young ballplayers of Saipan.

Bong was an 18-year-old starting pitcher back home when he made it to the Braves' lineup in the minor league in 1999.

"I was very young. I was so scared because there was no family to look after me. I couldn't speak English. But year after year, I learned to keep up with the pace and improve my English," recalled Bong.

Former Atlanta Braves starting pitcher Joong Keun Bong poses during a break in the LG Twins' training camp at the Oleai Sports Complex.

NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.

The big chance came in 2003 when he finally threw his first pitch with the Braves.

"I was the starting pitcher and I was very happy. I always cherish those moments," Bong said.

He never went to the World Series.

However, Bong and the Braves won the NL Division championship but lost to the Chicago Cubs in the first round of the playoffs in 2003.

"It was a good experience. It made me more confident," he said.

The Braves won the NL championship in 2004 and 2005 but also dropped their first round playoffs in both occasions.

Bong had a lot of great memories

See EX-BRAVES on Page 26

FIBA: Saipan expected to keep Oceania caging hosting rights

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth's hosting of the 2009 Oceania Tournament is still on after FIBA Oceania received an assurance that the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium will be repaired in time in for the June event.

"FIBA Oceania has held extensive discussion with BANMI president Elias Rangamar and received assurances that the necessary support has been received from government departments to effect the repairs to the gym, as requested by FIBA Oceania," FIBA Oceania secretary general Steve Smith said in an email to *Saipan Tribune*.

Smith

"I will now follow up those assurances by seeking a timeline for the completion of these works and most likely will program an inspection visit to Saipan in the months ahead of the tournament to assess the state of completion of the works," he said

Smith added that BANMI has recently secured a significant local financial sponsor for this tournament. Basketball Association of Northern Mariana Islands secretary general Michael White declined to name the local sponsors, but said an announcement will be made at the appropriate time.

"These are all positive developments which encourages us to believe that a

See FIBA on Page 26

Percy, Yho top January roll-offs

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Veteran keglers Percy Omechalang and Yho Villavicencio kicked off the Year of the Ox in style, winning the January Budweiser King and Queen of the Lanes Tenpin Bowling Tournament last Monday at the Saipan Bowling Center.

Omechalang leapfrogged past first day leader Raymond Zapanta with an eye-popping four-game series of 859, good for a 214.75 average.

He started out with a roll of 196 before catching fire with a 215 in the second game. He came back to earth with a pedestrian 189 in the third game, but more than made that up with a swashbuckling 259 performance in the fourth and final game.

Zapanta settled for runner-up honors after his 793 total and 198.25 average on Sunday was eclipsed by Omechalang. The IT&E employee bucked a slow start that saw him fire 177 and 156 in the first two games, only to explode with 247 and 213 in the final two.

Simon Manacop was third for the January tilt after his four-game series of 194, 170, 167, and 230 allowed him to end up with a 190.25 average.

Omechalang took home $100 for his feat in 2009's first monthly tournament by the Saipan Bowling Association, while Zapanta and Manacop earned $50 and $30, respectively.

Southpaw Richard Leong also made it to the money list with his 754 and 188.5 numbers and pocketed $15 for his troubles.

Villavicencio, meanwhile, edged Day 1 leader Linda Yarobwemal after tattooing 727 pins on Monday.

She started off on the right foot, downing 218 pins in the first before coming up with so-so rolls of 149, 184, and 176 in the final three.

Villavicencio's total was 11 pins more than what Yarobwemal rolled on Sunday, which saw her string together a series of 133, 148, 241, and 194—good for a 716 total and 179 average.

Ron Cal wound up third when her four-game series of 195, 163, 141, and 206 gave her a total of 705 and 176.25 average.

Villavicencio, Yarobwemal, and Cal were $65, $35, and $20 richer respectively after the tournament.

The January King and Queen of the Lanes drew a total of 44 entries—23 men and 21 women. It was organized by SBA and sponsored by MARPAC.

Last Sunday, Raphael Zapanta won the year's first Bing Prince of the Lanes after knocking down 700 pins—175 average. He beat seven other youth bowlers.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

January Budweiser King of the Lanes Percy Omechalang, right, poses with January Budweiser Queen of the Lanes Yho Villavicencio after the tournament last Monday at the Saipan Bowling Center.

Heo wins first game in New Zealand

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ji Hoon Heo serves during a training session in Australia. Heo is now in New Zealand for three more tournaments.

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REPORTER

CNMI junior tennis player Ji Hoon Heo won his first game in New Zealand topping a player from Auckland in the qualifying round for the 2009 Canterbury Championships in Wilding Park, Canterbury.

Heo defeated Chester Espie in straight sets, 6-0, 6-1, before bowing to Ari Davis in the quarterfinals in three hard fought sets.

The CNMI bet stunned Davis in the first set, 6-4, before the Kiwi netter recovered in the next two sets, 6-4, 6-0, to pull off the win.

Despite a quarterfinals loss, Heo

See HEO on Page 26